

Here are five additional suggestions to reduce your sitting time:

1. Set a timer out of arm's reach. Using your smartphone or a regular kitchen timer, set an alarm to go off every 60 minutes during the day when you tend to sit for long periods of time. Put the device across the room to force yourself to get up to turn it off.

2. Pace or tidy up during phone calls. Whenever you're on the phone, stand up. Try to walk back and forth or in circles while you talk. Or use a hands-free headset and straighten up your office or do some light housework while you chat.

3. Move a little while you watch TV. According to a recent Nielsen report, the average American watches five hours of television a day, and that amount increases as people age. Use the two- or three-minute commercial breaks while you are watching TV to stand up. March in place, swing your arms, or do some squats or leg lifts.

4. Catch up with friends while walking. Social visits often tend to be sedentary, so instead of meeting a friend for coffee or lunch, take a walk instead. Or take a stroll before or after a dinner date.

5. Take the long way. Whenever you drive somewhere, park in a spot farther from the door to get in some extra steps.

Snacking, stress, and stiffness

The danger may arise in part from other habits linked to excessive sitting. If you're binge-watching TV, for instance, you may be tempted to munch on sweet, salty, fatty snacks, making you more prone to gain weight. Surveys suggest that the typical office worker sits for at least 10 hours a day. Spending long, uninterrupted hours in front of a computer screen can create tension in your neck and shoulders. This physical stress may trigger mental stress, thereby raising blood pressure and, in turn, risk of heart disease. Sitting a lot also tends to cause stiffness in your hip flexors, the muscles at the top of the leg where the thigh meets the pelvis. Inflexible hip flexors (especially if you're older) can leave you more vulnerable to falls and injuries — and therefore unable to exercise at all.