

Is Sitting the New Smoking?

We've all heard the mantra, "Sitting is the new smoking." This past month, the news seemingly got more dire thanks to an article in *Scientific American* called "Killer Chairs: How Desk Jobs Ruin Your Health," by James Levine. In the story, the author discusses the shocking fact that 18 studies conducted over the past 16 years (which included 800,000 participants) suggest that chairs are lethal to your body. It makes sense, he says, if you consider that Americans spend on average 13 hours a day sitting down.

What's so bad about taking a seat? A lot. "Sitters" have a 50% higher likelihood of dying than those who stand, exercise or stay active during the day. After all, the human body was not designed to be sedentary. When you're idle, your metabolism slows, which reduces the amount of food your body converts to energy... and the result? You pack on pounds. The more weight you gain, the harder it becomes to motivate yourself to get up and keep moving. See the problem?

Don't worry, I'm not about to suggest you give up a desk job to get more exercise. That's not realistic, but there are many things you can do to keep yourself moving while you work to counteract the stress of sitting. Here are a few:

- 1) **Update your desk.** Workstations have gone high-tech, and they don't have to be expensive. Look into desks with tops that raise so you can stand, or fancier options like those that come with a walk pad.

- 2) **Move around.** Set your alarm every hour on the hour. When it goes off, you get up and move. Take a lap around the office, follow up with co-workers face to face, or deliver messages in person.

- 3) **Work standing.** Make an agreement with yourself to perform certain activities standing at your desk, whether it's talking

on the phone, reading the news, catching up on trades, or following up on e-mail.

4) **Explore your building.** Whether you're using their bathroom, their cafeteria or just breezing through, pop over to other floors in your office to maximize steps and keep legs moving.

5) **Shut your door.** Between meetings or while taking a conference call, shut your door and stand, do some crunches, touch your toes, or lift small weights. Don't just sit there!