



Is **SITTING** the NEW smoking?

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There's a good chance you're sitting while reading this article. We sit while driving the kids to school and while driving to work. Many of us sit at a desk all day at the office. We do it all over again at the end of the day, when we commute to pick up the kids at school and drive home. Then we sit on the couch for a couple hours watching TV before bedtime. What may be surprising to many people is that sitting all day is harmful to their health. It has even been compared to smoking. Recent research has demonstrated the negative effect sitting for long periods of time can have on the human body. Even more unsettling — regular exercise doesn't seem to counteract the effects of prolonged sitting. As a vein specialty center, we are focused not only on treating vein conditions but also educating healthcare consumers on how a healthy lifestyle may prevent future vein conditions.

Here are a few examples of how a sedentary life can negatively impact vein health, your overall health — AND a few prevention tips.

VARICOSE VEINS

Regularly sitting for long periods leads to poor circulation in your legs. When you sit your veins must work harder to move blood to your heart. This can lead to swelling in your ankles, varicose veins, and even blood clots, also known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Sitting with your legs crossed or bent can be worse.

HEART DISEASE

Blood flows slower when you sit and your muscles burn less fat. It then becomes easier for fatty acids to obstruct your heart. Published research in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, for example, demonstrated that when women sit for

10 hours a day they may have a much greater risk of developing heart disease.

DIGESTION PROBLEMS

If you sit after eating, this causes your abdominal contents to compress and digestion slows. Sluggish digestion can lead to symptoms such as cramping, bloating, and constipation.

POSTURE PROBLEMS

- **Sore Neck and Shoulders:** Sitting and working at a computer or talking on the phone can mean you're moving your neck and head forward in an unnatural way. Over time, this can lead to imbalances in your spine that will cause sore neck and shoulders.
- **Back Pain:** Sitting is harder on your spine than standing. Sitting and hunching in front of a computer is even worse. Some studies show that 40% of people with back pain spend long hours daily at a computer.

WEAKENED MUSCLES

- **When you stand, your abdominal muscles are engaged.** When you sit, your abdominal muscles can go unused and over time become weak.
- **Hip Problems:** Your hips become tight after long periods of sitting. This in turn limits your range of motion because they are not extended. For the elderly, a leading cause of falls can be attributed to decreased hip mobility.
- **Your glutes become weakened with prolonged sitting.** This affects the stability of your body and your stride when walking, running and jumping. As vein care specialists, our particular interest

is on the impact of sitting on leg and vein health. Studies have shown more than 30 million Americans suffer from varicose veins. Extended sitting makes varicose vein symptoms worse because of the increased pressure. People living a sedentary lifestyle may experience worsening of one or more of the following symptoms: achy or "restless" legs, tired legs and heavy legs. Leg pain, limb swelling and varicose veins in particular have in the past been misconceived as cosmetic or age-related problems. Vein symptoms often create medical complications that can become more serious over time. It's important to address these symptoms before they become serious. There are a number of non-invasive and minimally invasive vein treatment options available today to address vein conditions. We encourage patients to make healthy lifestyle choices. A popular alternative to the seated desk now is the standing desk. Unfortunately, excessive standing can have a negative impact on your health also.

So, what can you do to decrease your chance of developing one of the conditions above?

An expert statement published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine recommends that Americans should strive to stand, move and take breaks for at least two out of eight hours during the work day. Once accomplished, Americans should gradually build up to spending at least half of the eight-hour workday doing "light-intensity activities." Light intensity activities can include standing when talking on the phone, parking further away from the office, and taking the stairs rather than elevator. VeinNevada is committed to providing the highest quality vein and vascular services to clients through the Northern Nevada region. 🌱

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references

Resources:

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/varicose-spider-veins.html>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/sitting/faq-20058005>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/06/02/medical-researchers-have-figured-out-how-much-time-is-okay-to-spend-sitting-each-day/>



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