

8 Negative Health Effects Of Physical Inactivity

By MaryAnn DePietro, CRT. May 7th 2016

Most people know physical activity, such as regular exercise, is important for weight loss and optimal health. What some people do not realize is being physically inactive is considered a risk factor for several illnesses and medical conditions. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 2 million people worldwide die from conditions related to physical inactivity. People of all ages, from children to the elderly, can suffer negative consequences if they live a sedentary lifestyle and are physically inactive. Below are 8 negative effects of physical inactivity.

1. Increased Chance of Developing Hypertension

Hypertension, which is also known as high blood pressure, is one of the main risk factors for having serious medical conditions develop, such as a stroke or kidney disease. Blood pressure measures how forceful blood is pushed against the artery walls. Physical activity, such as regular exercise, helps make the heart stronger. As the heart becomes stronger, it can pump blood more efficiently throughout the body. When the heart does not have to work as hard, less force is put on the arteries and blood pressure is lower.

2. Risk of Developing Heart Disease Increases

Physical inactivity can contribute to heart disease in a few ways. The efficiency of coronary blood flow is impaired in people who are physically inactive. Another link between inactivity and heart disease is cholesterol levels. One of the main factors that contributes to heart disease is high cholesterol. The chances of developing high cholesterol increase in those who are physically inactive. Exercise helps lower LDL cholesterol levels. Being physically active can also increase levels of HDL cholesterol, which is good cholesterol that helps protect against heart disease.

3. Osteoporosis is More Likely to Occur

The phrase “use it or lose it” really does apply when referring to the bones in the body. Without proper physical activity, overtime the bones can become weak. When this occurs, the condition is known as osteoporosis, which can cause the bones to fracture easily. The condition occurs most frequently in older adults. Physical activity helps strengthen the bones and prevent osteoporosis from developing.

4. Colon and Breast Cancer Risk Increases

Physical inactivity contributes to the risk of colon cancer in a few ways. Waste moves through the colon slower in people who are sedentary. This increases the time the waste spends in the colon, which may allow the colon to be exposed to possible carcinogens for a longer period of time. Physical activity helps keep things moving through the colon faster. Breast cancer may also occur more often in women who are inactive. According to the National Cancer Institute, hormone levels may be lowered with regular exercise, which can decrease the chance of breast tumors developing.

5. Doubles the Risk of Obesity

When an individual has a body mass index over 30 he or she is considered obese. According to the WHO, people who are physically inactive have twice the risk of developing obesity. Obesity is a major health concern for people of all ages including children. Illnesses related to obesity include heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and sleep apnea. In the United States each year there are over 300,000 deaths related to obesity.

6. Increased Chance of Gallstone Formation

Gallstones are hard deposits of bile, which form in the gallbladder. Gallstones can cause symptoms such as abdominal pain, fever and nausea. Negative effects of physical inactivity, such as increased time for waste to go through the colon along with higher triglycerides can both increase the chance of developing gallstones.

7. Adult Onset Diabetes is More Likely to Develop

Type 2 diabetes, also known as adult onset diabetes, occurs when insufficient levels of insulin are produced, or resistance to insulin develops. Two risk factors for developing adult onset diabetes include being overweight and physical inactivity. Complications of diabetes include kidney disease and heart disease, eye problems and nerve damage.

8. Higher Chance of Developing Depression and Anxiety

Along with physical problems related to inactivity, negative emotional effects can also develop. According to the WHO people who are sedentary are more likely to develop anxiety and depression. Exercise helps reduce or prevent anxiety and depression in several ways. When a person is physically active, chemicals are released in the brain which help improve mood and reduce stress.

Unlike other risk factors for diseases, such as age and gender, physical inactivity can be changed. Making lifestyle changes and incorporating daily physical activity, such as increasing walking and taking the stairs is a start. Adding regular exercise on most days of the week is optimal. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of cardiovascular exercise a week and doing strength building exercise two days a week. The good news is, in time the negative effects of physical inactivity may be reversed or decreased.