



## EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH

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# The Top 3 Reasons Why Sitting is the New Smoking

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It should come as no surprise to anyone in this day and age that sitting for prolonged periods of time is not beneficial to your overall health. We have long since known the adverse effects that chronic seated postures have on low back pain, neck dysfunction, headaches and even contributing to obesity. In one of my roles as a chiropractor and health & wellness doctor in Ottawa, I have long been educating patients and wellness clients on the proper way to sit as well as correcting the many injuries derived therefrom.

However, the truth is that the adverse effects from sitting have been under-rated for far too long where sitting is now referred to as the “new smoking”. If you think this is all hype which is being overblown please consider the following;

### 1. We Sit Far More Than You Realize

It is estimated that the average person will spend just over 37 years of their life in a seated position. Given that most people have poor postural strength and alignment; this is 37 years of sitting in a slouched or unsupported position putting significantly undue pressure on your spine. As any of my chiropractic patients will tell you, undue pressure on your spine will in turn adversely affect your nervous system as nerves exit from each level of your vertebrae thus essentially disrupting your brain-body connection. As such, your brain will be unable to communicate with the rest of your body at an optimal level.

Now consider that even if you were to sit in a well maintained posture with good core strength and proper spinal alignment, the low back still receives 10 times the amount of pressure in a seated posture as opposed to a standing posture. Let's not also forget that sitting is not just something that we do in front of our computer at work but also in front of the television, in school, while travelling, at meal time and so much more.

Finally, don't forget to appreciate that the figure of 37 years applies to 37 years at 24 hours per day. To put that into perspective that is equivalent to 111 years at 8 hours per day.

**The average person will sit 8 hours per day for 111 years**

### 2. Sitting Takes Years Off Our Lives

One could easily make the rational argument that sitting for that length of time over the course of your life time would of course decrease your life span in many ways. The significant inactivity would likely lead to obesity and cardiovascular disease, the undue

spinal pressure would speed osteoarthritis and lead to increased prescription drug use, the lack of optimum nerve flow would adversely affect organ function and so much more.

But scientists now have concrete evidence to support the comparison of sitting to smoking. As reported in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, even if you regularly exercise, **every single hour spent sitting in front of the television after the age of 25 actually reduces your life expectancy by almost 22 minutes!** By comparison, smoking a single cigarette reduces your life expectancy by 11 minutes. **That's right – one hour of sitting will reduce your life by twice as much as smoking one cigarette.** Furthermore, those who sat the most had a 112% increase in risk for diabetes, a 149% increased risk for cardiovascular disease and an almost 50% increased risk of dying prematurely.

### 3. Your Forward Head Posture is Killing You

While sitting is finally being recognized for its significant adverse effects, chiropractors have been warning their patients of the adverse effects of what is known as Forward Head Posture (FHP) for decades. This is the all too common position where one carries their head forward over their shoulders (your head weighs about the weight of a bowling ball) putting significant undue stress on the neck and found in most people when looking at their computer screens and now mobile phones. This leads to neck pain, headaches, postural stress, nerve dysfunction, osteoarthritis and so much more. It has become so prevalent that most people maintain this posture continually and are then surprised when they turn into the stereotypical little old lady with the hump at the base of their neck wrongly believing that this is due to genetics. Even the Mayo Clinic reported more than a decade ago that prolonged forward head posture leads to headache, disc herniation and osteoarthritis.

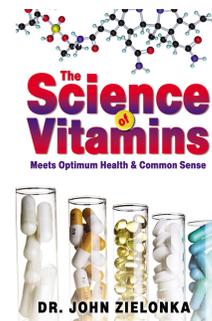
Worse yet, it also leads to pathological changes in the neck which affect blood flow to the brain and studies on cadavers show that **people who maintain this FHP over the course of their lifetime actually stretch their spinal cord by as much as 5 to 7 centimetres.** As I often tell my patients, you don't need to be a chiropractor to know that stretching your spinal cord by 5 to 7 centimetres is not a good thing.

### So What Do We Do?

Maintain your prescribed spinal neurological exercise program specific to you, be sure to continue your chiropractic wellness program for postural alignment and optimal nerve function, ensure good ergonomics and by all means, stop sitting so much – it's killing you!



Dr. John Zielonka is one of Canada's best known and most trusted health and wellness experts. He is the Director of Health & Wellness Canada and the Founder of National Health Day in Canada. Both a best-selling author and speaker, he is also a regular contributor to CTV Morning Live. Winner of the Consumer Choice Award for 2011, 2012 & 2013, he is owner of the Ottawa Chiropractic & Natural Health Centre, "Ottawa's Premier Centre for Health & Wellness since 1995" in the World Exchange Plaza in downtown Ottawa. He is also the owner of [Your Health Store](#), home to Canada's best vitamins and the owner of [Custom Orthotics Ottawa](#). The latest of his 5 books, "The Science of Vitamins Meets Optimum Health & Common-Sense", is now available. If we can be of service please call us today at (613) 688-1036 or please visit [www.excellenceinhealth.com](http://www.excellenceinhealth.com) or [www.drjohnzielonka.com](http://www.drjohnzielonka.com)



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