

Self-Care Corner

Move in minutes

Sitting for extended periods can raise the chances of developing cancer even for people who exercise regularly, says recent research. In response to these findings, fitness experts at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center share advice on how to get moving in minutes.

“Taking just one- to two-minute breaks from sitting may help lower your cancer risk,” said Dr. Karen Basen-Engquist, professor in the Department of Behavioral Science. “That’s because even short spurts of movement can help minimize inflammation, insulin resistance, and long-term weight gain—all factors that make it harder for the body to fight off cancer.”

Basen-Engquist, who uses a pedometer and tries to get at least 500 steps an hour, offers these tips to get moving—no matter how many minutes you can grab each day.

Have 5 minutes? Stretch.

Take breaks from sitting at work or home by standing up and stretching your back, forearms, wrists, legs, and hamstrings. Among the benefits: more energy, better circulation, and less muscle tension and stress.

Have 10-15 minutes? Take a brisk walk.

Head out during your lunchtime. Take walking meetings with coworkers. Plan a quick trip around the neighborhood. Walking helps maintain a healthier blood pressure, boosts metabolism, curbs stress, and possibly reduces breast and colorectal cancer risk.

Just keep in mind that brisk walking yields more benefits than a casual stroll. So you should feel a little out of breath and feel your heart beating a little faster.

Have 20-30 minutes? Tidy the house.

Tidying up does more than limit couch time. It can also qualify as aerobic activity. To get your heart rate up, focus on repetitive activities that use large muscle groups, like the legs and back. This includes vacuuming, mopping, scrubbing, gardening, and even taking multiple trips upstairs to put away laundry.

Have just 1-2 minutes? Take the stairs.

Skip the elevator or escalator and take the stairs at work and when doing errands. Stairs get your heart pumping, build muscle, strengthen bones, and burn calories. The more often you take one step at a time, the bigger the payoff.

