

Turn On, Tune In, Drop Dead

A study in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation* finds that cardiovascular disease rates rise with average daily TV viewing times--even if you're physically fit.

Attention, couch potatoes. Every hour spent on the sofa watching TV, whether it's *Iron Chef* or *Biggest Loser*, is bad for your heart. Researchers tracked the viewing habits and health of nearly 9,000 adults to come up with the not-too-surprising finding, published in the journal *Circulation*. What's alarming is just how bad being fused to your Lazyboy turns out to be.

For every hour glued to the boob tube each day, a participant's risk of death from cardiovascular disease shot up 18 percent. Viewers who tuned in daily for four hours or longer were 80 percent more likely to die from cardiovascular disease compared with people who watched TV for two hours or less each day.

And it didn't matter if the subjects were overweight smokers or vegetarian fitness fanatics—their risk rose with TV time. Because whether you're watching TV, contemplating a computer screen or simply staring at the wall, sitting for long stretches negatively affects levels of blood sugar and fats. Fortunately, there is a win-win solution: your gym probably has a TV visible from the treadmill.

Reported on ScientificAmerican.com, 60-Second Science, Jan 13, 2010 by Adam Hinterthuer

Editor's Comment:

As some readers comment on the Scientific American website, the study concludes that TV watching and working on a computer are equally detrimental to the cardiovascular system. However, computer work tends to demand significantly more mental energy than passively watching a TV show. Further studies are needed to ascertain if computer and other sedentary work are equally as bad as watching TV, and what can be done to reduce the risk.

On the other hand, the study results are significant enough to warn us that there may be a risk involved in doing sedentary work. Make sure that you take regular, active breaks from your desk job: walk around, climb stairs, do some stretching exercises, go for a walk around the block, arrange for an extended lunch hour and go to the gym or exercise before and/or after work.

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