How much exercise do you need to undo the harm of a life spent sitting down?

TNN | Apr 12, 2016, 01.00AM IST

Exercising for as little as two-and-a-half hours a week can undo damage done by sitting down all day, a study has found. The study, which was conducted by a UK-based university found that even moderate activity can be enough for a health boost.   
  
Sedentary behaviour — any waking behaviour with low energy expenditure while in a sitting or reclining posture — has been linked to ill health. But medics are concerned as many adults now spend between half and nearly three quarters of waking hours sitting. Dr Thomas Yates, who worked on the study, says, "It is possible for an individual, over the course of a day, to have high levels of physical activity and still accumulate large amounts of sedentary time."   
  
The study used data from the 2008 Health Survey to paint a representative sample of adults. They were grouped as busy bees: physically active with low sedentary levels, sedentary exercisers: physically active with high sedentary levels, light movers: physically inactive, had low sedentary; and couch potatoes: physically inactive, high sedentary. Dr Yates says, "Overall, adults who engaged in at least 150 min of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week, including sedentary exercisers had more favourable health profiles compared to couch potatoes.

By suggesting that being physically active may offset some of the deleterious consequences of routinely engaging in high levels of sedentary behaviour, this study further emphasises the importance of physical activity in the promotion and maintenance of health. It shows that people who spend large amounts of time not moving either through work, leisure or lifestyle can counteract some of the negative effects of sedentary behaviour by regularly exercising.   
  
— Daily Mirror