

# Moving Toward Better Health.

By: **Floyde Spencer**

This article is the first in a series of editorials geared toward “*Keeping Cranbrook Moving.*” At this point in time, an introduction may be in order. My name is Floyde Spencer. I am an Australian trained Physiotherapist and have lived in Canada since 1994. Our family moved to Cranbrook in 2004 to continue the operation of Cranbrook Physiotherapy Clinic after the retirement of well-known local physiotherapist, Blair Farish. Blair has continued in his retirement to keep Cranbrook moving by working hard to save our athletic track at the College of the Rockies. Cranbrook Physiotherapy Clinic has been in operation for almost 35 years and we look forward to serving Cranbrook for another 35 years. I consider myself a fully fledged Canadian now that we have had a hockey rink in the back yard all this winter.

It has been said “laughter is the best medicine.” I would have to agree with this in most cases. (Except when you have a cracked rib) In fact, some folks have laughed so hard that they cracked a rib, but that is a story for another day. I would like to suggest “movement is the best medicine.” Literally millions of dollars in health care could be saved in British Columbia alone if we were able to get greater portions of the population moving their bodies safely.

I am often asked to advise folks on how to exercise safely. We actually coined a phrase in Australia, “To get fit to get fit...see a Physio.” Most people who have never had a major injury and are relatively fortunate genetically can start an exercise program ‘cold turkey’ but for the rest of us a little professional help may be needed.

The single biggest factor that limits Canadians staying with a regular exercise program is literally this. **We sit too much.** I am not attempting to be cute here because as a typical ‘western’ culture, our lives revolve around the sitting posture. Scientists have actually studied this and the conclusion is we now sit more than at any time in our history. I read a study the other day that was quite encouraging at first. The good news was that Canadians were spending less time watching television. The bad news is we have replaced sitting in front of the television with even more time sitting in front of the computer. With that in mind I would like to encourage you right now to stand up to read the rest of the paper. It could save your life.

Our bodies were not designed to be idle for prolonged periods of time. Few people realize the profound effects on the body of too much sitting over a lifetime. Some of the more obvious effects are felt when you attempt to stand up after a scoreless period at the Kootenay Ice.

From a medical standpoint, research has shown a link between too much sitting and a number of unsavory conditions affecting our health. These include degenerative disc disease of the spine, increased risk of falling and fracture in the elderly, increased risk of stroke and weakening of the stabilizing muscles of the spine. (to name a few)

Time for me to stop sitting at this computer. Next month we will find out what NASA astronauts have in common with 66 year old osteoporotic Grandma...and most of us now standing here reading this article. In the meantime, if you need some help getting your body moving again, see your local “Movement Specialist,” the Physiotherapist. Don’t take your health sitting down.

Floyde Spencer is a Physiotherapist at Cranbrook Physiotherapy Clinic.