

Managing back pain at work



A simple guide to proper posture when you sit in a chair all day

There are a lot of claims on what makes a perfect posture, from how far you are away from your screen to the angle of your chair. However, there is not a lot of research to support that ergonomic guidance has a significant effect on back pain. There is even less evidence to show that one position is superior to others when it comes to sitting.

Ergonomic guidelines often suggest there are optimal ways to set up your chair, desk, and screen. However, the most important tip to remember is to not stay in any one position for a long period of time. You should prioritise taking breaks when possible and shift positions when the one you are in starts feeling uncomfortable.

Exercises can be a very good way to help break up a long day sitting in a chair. This allows you to not only have a break, but increases movement and mobility. Why not suggest a health challenge to the rest of your coworkers; this could be doing a plank or a certain amount of squats every day! It creates some accountability and makes it easier to remember to move during a long day at the office, or while working from home.

Exercising and moving when you are able to will also have some other positive health benefits which may decrease some of the negative health effects associated with being sedentary.

There is not one position or posture for sitting that is superior to others. You may find a certain position more comfortable for you, and you are probably going to be spending more time in that one, which is okay. But after a while, most positions will start to be uncomfortable. At that point, simply shift positions or get up and take a short break.

Remember that the next posture is the best posture, and there is always some way you can change how you are sitting. The only bad posture, per se, is the one you spend too much time in.

Do you get back pain when standing up from sitting? Here's what you should do about it

If you are suffering from back pain, you are not alone. A good percentage (up to 85%!) of the population will suffer from back pain at some point in their life. For those that deal with back pain on a daily basis, simple activities of daily living can be an aggravating factor. This can include lifting, bending forward, and standing from a seated position, which many of us do every day while at work.

Activities and movements such as these are very common symptoms of back pain, and while they can be uncomfortable and unpleasant, the pain doesn't mean that you are damaging your back. Rather, it's just your body's way of telling you that you potentially have to make some modifications to your activities, such as the amount that you do and the way you move, for the time being.

There are few things more irritating than feeling stiff, tight or in pain when you stand up from a seated position. Thankfully, there are some simple techniques that you can implement to relieve this discomfort.

To minimise the risk of aggravating back pain, try to avoid staying in any one seated or standing position for too long. Change up your posture throughout the day, especially if you spend long periods sat in front of a desk or computer. As above, there's no specific posture to aim for; simply find a position that feels comfortable and then change when it starts to feel uncomfortable. You may also find it helpful to place a support for your lumbar curve, such as rolled up towel or small pillow, for some of the time you spend seated.

Though you may feel tempted to reduce your activity levels as a result of your back pain, staying active is essential if you are to recover from back pain in the long term. Although you may have to make modifications to your normal activity levels, it's really important not to stop all forms of activity altogether - evidence shows that excessively lying down and resting is not helpful for your back pain recovery, and may actually make the pain worse.

Start slow; integrate some low impact exercise such as walking, swimming or any other activities that you love and that your body can handle into your weekly routine. Whether working from the office or your home, adding a daily lunchtime walk into your routine is a simple way to stay active and will help you avoid being sat down all day. Alongside this, start doing general strengthening exercises and also exercises that are specifically targeted to your back, as this will help make your back and surrounding muscles stronger and more resilient.

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