

If your job involves sitting at a desk for long periods, here are some things you can do to avoid

back pain



Back conditions and back pain generally don't just happen overnight – very often they are caused by longer term bad posture habits consolidated by poor general fitness or getting older. This fact sheet gives some key tips on how to avoid the onset of a back condition caused by the way you sit at your desk.

Posture

Be more aware of how you sit at your desk. Poor posture and prolonged periods of sitting make you more vulnerable to back pain.

- ✓ Use the back of your chair to help support the natural curves of your spine.
- ✓ Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees when seated.
- ✓ Make sure your feet are touching the floor.
- ✓ Avoid leaning forwards and hunching your back.
- ✓ When using a keyboard your forearms should be horizontal with your elbows at right angles. The keyboard should be about 10cm from the edge of the desk.
- ✓ Your eyes should be level with the top of your monitor and you should not have to bend your neck to view it.

Keep moving

Your body is not designed to be sitting at a desk all day. Make sure you get up from your desk at regular intervals and carry out some physical activity, or do some simple stretches.

Relax

Tension in your body can help bring on muscle spasm. Be aware of tensions in your back and take steps to diffuse them, e.g. with stretching or breathing exercises.

Lift with care

One of the main triggers of back pain is the act of lifting. Whenever you have to lift a heavy or awkward load, remember the following recommended practices:

- ✓ When you lift, bend your knees and keep your back straight.
- ✓ Keep the item close to your body – “love the load”.
- ✓ Avoid twisting your back while lifting – it is better to turn your feet.
- ✓ Avoid lifting awkwardly in confined spaces.
- ✓ Don't try and be a hero – if in any doubt, ask a colleague to help.

Avoid bad habits

Try to become more aware of bad posture habits that put you at risk. A classic example is the act of wedging a telephone handset between head and shoulder while taking a message.

Keep yourself fit

Back pain is more likely to occur if your general level of fitness is low and/or you are overweight. Undertaking some gentle physical activity or doing a few stretches will help keep your back in good shape. Drinking plenty of water during the day will also help maintain a healthy musculo-skeletal system.

More info on: www.backproactive.com