

TOOLBOX TALKS

A Quality Service Contractors Publication for Members

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Don't Take Back Problems Sitting Down



Why do so many of us have back problems today? In part, it's the way our work and lifestyle has evolved. As people grow more sedentary in an increasingly automated world, we're doing more sitting and adding extra pounds. As a result, our backs are becoming more vulnerable to injury.

Sitting especially slouching is one of the most common positions during our waking hours. It also happens to be one of the worst positions for our backs, by putting continuous pressure on the lower back muscles and disks.

Low back pain is a warning that something is wrong. Recognize this warning and take steps to prevent a back problem from getting worse. Here are some helpful suggestions if you sit for long periods during the course of your workday.

- Choose the right chair, a chair that supports the length and width of your back with adjustable armrests and a seat height you can adjust.
- Sit smart. Sit straight and close to your work, don't slump forward. Your buttocks should rest against the back of the seat. Your knees should stick out a hand's width beyond the edge of the chair with your feet resting comfortably on the floor or footrest.
- Adjust your work height and angle. Your surface work and keyboard should be at elbow level. If you work at a computer, the top of your screen should be eye level.
- If possible, get up regularly and stretch or, shift your sitting position at least once every 30 minutes.

Vehicular vibration adds additional stress to the backs of those who drive long distances. Here's some back comfort tips for drivers.

- Position the seat forward so that your knees are bent. If the tilt of the seats can be adjusted, change the angle slightly every so often.
- Placing a cushion at the small of your back and sitting in a slightly reclining angle may ease pressure on your lower back while driving.
- Change your sitting position frequently or get out of the vehicle every hour and walk around for a few minutes.
- Grip the steering wheel at the nine and three o'clock hand positions. This puts your arms and shoulders in a more neutral position.

There are also some general lifestyle choices which can reduce stress on your back. Sleep on a firm mattress, control your weight, getting some exercise, and for men, take out bulging wallet out of your back pocket when you sit. Make sitting a pleasure not a pain.



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