

# SITTING DOWN ON THE JOB



Does your job find you sitting most of the day? While sitting can seem restful, keep in mind that staying in any one position for long periods of time can cause strain and injury to your muscles, joints, tendons and ligaments. Sustained sitting can take a toll on your neck and lower back – steady compression on the spinal discs hinders their nutrition and can contribute to premature degeneration. So, if you have to sit at work, what can you do to stay pain-free? Help take the load off your back with these tips:

## **Take frequent breaks**

Ensure you take regular breaks from sitting. Get up, take a short walk outside or around the office, and stretch.

## **Posture perfect**

Sitting incorrectly puts strain on your lower back, decreases blood flow to your working muscles and accelerates fatigue. Practise “active sitting” with your feet flat on the ground in front of you, your back straight, your shoulders squared and your chin parallel with the floor. This posture will strengthen the “core” muscles of your abdomen, sides and back to reduce the strain on other areas.

## **Choose a good office chair**

What’s most important in preventing injury and strain is to be able to easily vary your sitting positions throughout the day. An investment in a good office chair can help a lot. The right chair for you should:

- Be easily adjustable to suit your size
- Adapt to support your spine in various working positions
- Have a backrest that supports your lower back
- Have armrests, if they are appropriate to your work
- Have a front edge that curves downward to promote proper posture

## **Stability balls**

One recent trend is to use a stability ball at the office. While a ball is a great tool to help you tone your abs at home or at the gym, it should not replace a good chair at your work station. If you do bring the ball to work:

- Use the ball only for short periods
- Use your abdominal, back and side muscles to maintain straight posture
- Stop when your muscles feel tired
- Sitting on a ball instead of a chair can actually increase the pressure on your back, especially if your core muscles aren’t strong. So, sitting a long time on the ball may lead to greater discomfort in your lower back. Do not use a ball if you have osteoporosis, balance or low back problems.

