

# Proper Sitting, Standing, and Lifting at Work

## What is the proper position for sitting at work?

Prolonged sitting, especially if it involves use of a keyboard, puts a lot of stress on your muscles and joints. Neck and back problems can result, as well as overuse injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome. To help prevent injury you can try to sit correctly and adjust your workstation according to the following guidelines:

- ▶ Keep your head up straight, not tilted forward or back.
- ▶ Keep your thighs parallel to the floor. Your knees should be at a 90° angle and should be no higher than your hips. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Use a footrest if needed.
- ▶ Use a chair with good lower back (lumbar) support for the normal curve in your back. For additional support you can use a lumbar roll, a small pillow, or a rolled up towel.
- ▶ Make sure there is 2 to 3 inches of space between the back of your knee and the edge of your seat.

If you are using a computer:

- ▶ The monitor and keyboard should be directly in front of you.
- ▶ When using a keyboard, keep your elbows bent at a 90° angle.
- ▶ The top of your monitor should be at or slightly below eye level.
- ▶ Your wrists should be in a neutral position, not tilted up or down. Use wrist rests for extra support.

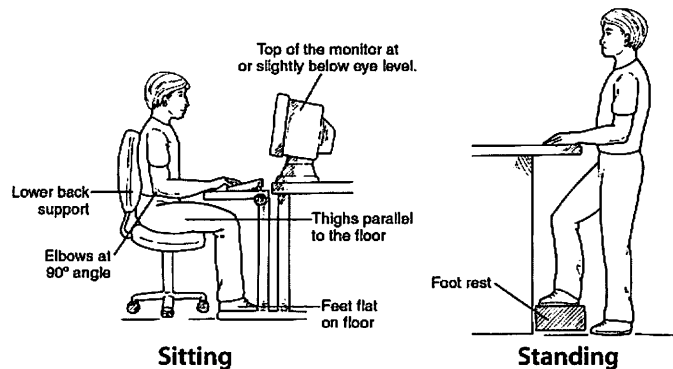
It is important to take frequent breaks during your workday and to avoid sitting for more than 1 hour at a time. Whenever possible, leave your chair and walk or stand for a minute or two. Take a mini-exercise break (1 to 2 minutes) every hour and a longer break (3 to 5 minutes), once every 2 to 3 hours. During your break, stretch your neck and back.

## What if I stand at work?

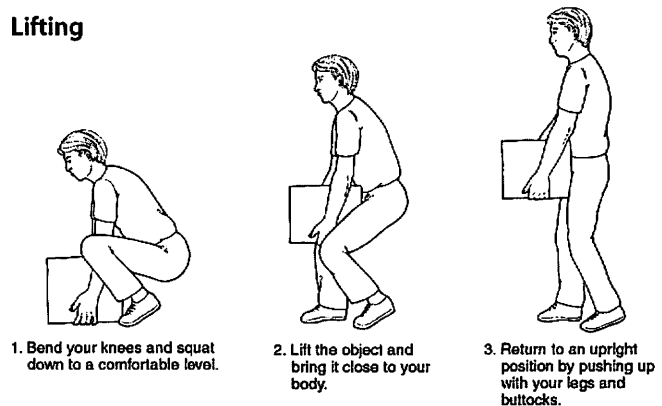
If your job involves standing for most of the day you should:

- ▶ Put one foot up on a footrest (about 6 to 8 inches high) to help decrease the pressure put on your spine.
- ▶ Stand as straight as possible to maintain the normal curves in your spine.
- ▶ Keep your work surface at or near waist level and try not to bend forward too much.
- ▶ Wear sturdy shoes with good arch support.
- ▶ Do back strengthening exercises.

## Proper Sitting, Standing, and Lifting



## Lifting





## How should I lift properly?

If your job involves lifting, make sure you use the proper lifting technique to avoid injury. The key to proper lifting is to maintain the natural curve in your back by squatting down rather than bending over at the waist. To lift properly:

- ▶ 1. Position yourself as close to the load as possible.
- ▶ 2. Stand with your feet apart and with one foot slightly in front of the other with your toes pointing slightly outward.
- ▶ 3. Test the weight of the load first and get help if it seems too heavy or bulky.
- ▶ 4. Bend your knees and squat down to a comfortable level.

- ▶ 5. Lift the object and bring it close to your body.
- ▶ 6. Return to a standing position by pushing up with your legs and buttocks.

Other helpful hints:

- ▶ Use the same technique described above in reverse to lower objects to the floor.
- ▶ Avoid any twisting of your back while lifting. Turn your body by taking small steps with your feet.
- ▶ Push or slide heavy objects rather than lift them.
- ▶ Always keep objects close to your body when you lift, lower, or carry them.

## Exercises for the Workplace

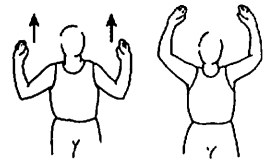
It is important to take frequent breaks during your workday and to avoid sitting for more than 1 hour at a time. In the course of a workday you should take a mini-exercise break (1 to 2 minutes) once per hour and a longer break (3 to 5 minutes), once every 2 to 3 hours. The following exercises can reduce fatigue and reduce your risk of developing an overuse injury. They can be done during short or long breaks. Do each stretch or exercise 3 to 5 times before moving to the next exercise.

**1. PECTORALIS STRETCH:** Stand in a doorway or corner with both arms on the wall slightly above your head. Slowly lean forward until you feel a stretch in the front of your shoulders. Hold 15 to 30 seconds.

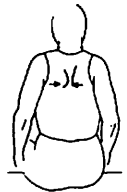


**2. THORACIC EXTENSION:** While sitting in a chair, clasp both arms behind your head. Gently arch backward and look up toward the ceiling.

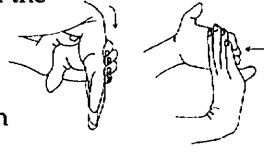
**3. ARM SLIDES ON WALL:** Sit or stand against a wall with your elbows and wrists against the wall. Slowly slide your arms upward as high as you can while keeping your elbows and wrists against the wall.



**4. SCAPULAR SQUEEZES:** While sitting or standing with your arms by your sides, squeeze your shoulder blades together and hold for 5 seconds.



**5. WRIST STRETCH:** With one hand, help to bend the wrist on your other hand down by pressing the back of your hand and holding it down for 15 to 30 seconds. Next, stretch the hand back by pressing the fingers in a backward direction and holding it for 15 to 30 seconds. Switch and stretch the other wrist.



**7. SCALENE STRETCH:** This stretches the neck muscles that attach to your ribs. Sitting in an upright position, clasp both hands behind your back, lower your left shoulder, and tilt your head toward the right. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds and then come back to the starting position. Lower your right shoulder and tilt your head toward the left until you feel a stretch. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds.



**6. UPPER TRAPEZIUS STRETCH:** The upper trapezius muscle connects your shoulder to your head. Sitting in an upright position, put your right arm behind your back and gently grasp the right side of your head with your left hand to help tilt your head toward the left. You will feel a gentle stretch on your right side. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Switch and stretch the other side.

