



BUREAU OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION

*PA Training for Health & Safety (PATHS)*

## **Proper Sitting Posture**

Many people such as office workers, truck drivers, emergency dispatchers, and students spend a good deal of their day sitting. While sitting you are actually putting more strain on your back than while standing or lifting. Spending many hours in one position, leaning over your work or slouching can cause a tired, aching back. Good posture is the key to a healthy back! Good posture means maintaining the natural curves of your back while sitting, standing, walking, etc. Without proper support it's easy to slump in a chair which causes your back to be "rounded" thus losing the lumbar curve.

### **Sitting Properly**

- Use a straight chair with support for your lower spinal curve. Use a cushion or rolled up towel behind your back to maintain the proper curve.
- Check the height of the seat. Adjust your seat so that your knees are slightly lower than your hips. If the height of the seat is not adjustable use a footrest if necessary.
- Keep your feet flat and avoid crossing your legs.
- Keep your ankles and elbows at right angles.
- Sit close to your desk so you don't have to bend forward. Keep your neck and back in a straight line.
- Position your work or your chair so you can look forward, rather than down. Use a document holder or move your computer screen so that the top is at eye level.
- Shift your position frequently to prevent strain. Take a short break every 30-40 minutes or do stretching exercises.

### **Sitting Safety**

- Avoid sudden, jerky movements.
- Take time to plan your actions and move cautiously and carefully.
- Avoid twisting your torso. Move your whole body when you turn with your feet and hips facing your destination.
- Turn toward things you need instead of reaching off to the side or pulling things toward you.
- When picking up objects that have fallen on the floor slide the edge of your chair and place a hand on your knee or your desk to support your back. Keep one foot in front for additional support.
- Take a few minutes to walk around the office or do some gentle stretches to relieve muscle tension.

## Exercises

Doing these exercises can help build strong, flexible muscles to support your back. They can also help relieve tension that can occur when you sit in one position for a long period of time. Each exercise takes just a few minutes to complete and can be done at your desk. Avoid doing any exercises that cause you pain.

- Face forward. Slowly turn your head toward your shoulder to look over it. Return to center. Repeat five (5) times. Do other side.
- Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on the chair or desk for support and slowly raise your feet off the ground as you straighten your legs.
- Clasp your hands behind your head and push your elbows back. Release the tension and then repeat five (5) times.
- Exhaling, slowly lean forward, drop your head toward your knees and let your hands drop at your ankles. Hold five (5) seconds. Inhaling, unwind, slowly bringing up your head. Exhaling, stretch your arms toward the ceiling. Repeat five (5) times.

