

Standing

While easier on the back than sitting, standing can also become a problem if maintained for an extended or prolonged period of time. Many people complain of back pain when they have been on their feet all day. Standing, particularly in a poor posture increases the demands on the back.

There are two types of postures that can lead to problems:

The Forward Slumped Posture

This is often associated with work areas that are too low. In this forward bent position, the back muscles must work to hold up the entire upper body and can lead to muscle fatigue. In addition, this position moves the spine out of its three natural curves and increases the pressure on the back.

Ideally, work areas should be placed at a level that allows work to be done in an upright posture. When that is not possible, periodic changes in posture or moving, plus a brief stretch throughout the day, will help to reduce the accumulation of fatigue.

The Overarched Posture

In this posture, people stand with their hips forward and rest on the joints of their backs. This posture overarches the low back and may lead to back pain, typical of people who work overhead for extended periods of time or who have weak abdominal muscles.

The overarched posture can be offset in a number of ways:

- Tightening the stomach muscles to reduce the arch in the lower back.
- When standing, elevate one foot slightly off the ground and rest it on a foot rail, stool, or small box.

Ask yourself, do I have to do this job standing up?

Sitting for a few minutes periodically during the day relieves stress on the back. Performing simple stretches, such as a gentle forward bend, can also reduce the accumulation of discomfort associated with prolonged standing. Soft-soled shoes or good quality shoe inserts can reduce the amount of pressure on the back when standing and walking on hard surfaces.



STANDING

Talking Notes

POINTS TO REVIEW

1. Bodies are designed for movement and stretching is the body's natural way of keeping itself moving.

The body functions best when it is in a balanced or power position. As soon as a person either slumps forward or backward, the normal balance is lost and the structures are placed under increased demands. This is not a problem if done occasionally, but many individuals stand in these postures for long periods of time.

2. To minimize the demands on your back while standing, use your legs efficiently.

The legs are magnificent shock absorbers. When an individual jumps off of a curb or elevated platform, they always bend their knees as they land. Why? To absorb the shock and reduce the pressure on the back. This shock absorption by the legs is also important while standing. Put a slight bend in the knees while standing to allow the muscles of the legs to absorb the shock that would otherwise be going up into the spine.

3. Get a wide base of support with one foot slightly in front of the other.

The best position for standing is one that would make it hard for someone to push you over. This staggered stance is with your legs shoulder width apart, one foot slightly in front of the other. A wide base of support reduces the demands on the back.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is standing for long periods of time a demanding task?

2. What are some simple steps for reducing the demands of standing?

3. Why is a wider base of support beneficial for your back when you are standing?

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