

Managing Back Pain at Work

Firstly, try to stay at work. If you can't keep doing the job that you usually do due to pain then see whether it can be changed. Common short-term solutions for back pain sufferers are reduced hours, altered work duties, more frequent breaking.

If you can't stay at work, then ensure you use your time off constructively and arrange to have treatment. Don't feel guilty about being off work - the worst thing you could do is put yourself to bed like a "sick" person. Do the activities and exercises that ease your pain. Follow the advice and exercises of your physiotherapy. If walking eases your pain then go out for a walk and don't worry about being seen by someone from work - after all, your walking is the equivalent of taking medicine for illness!

When you are back at your normal job, stand back and take a look at things objectively. Make it a mission to optimise your work environment ergonomically.

Look for ways of changing workplace layout and tasks so that you:

- Maintain a good posture (S-shaped spine)
- avoid or reduce bending
- avoid or reduce twisting
- avoid or reduce repetition
- alternate tasks
- break during tasks that take a long time or are repetitive
- change your posture frequently
- reduce weight by breaking it up if possible
- use adjustments on equipment
- introduce as much mechanical equipment that is practical or possible

There are many ways of making a task less physically demanding - all it needs is for you to stop and think about it. If you need help with workplace ergonomics then contact your Occupational Health, Safety or Personnel department.