

Adjusting your sit time

It is essential to stand regularly, to take a break, before your pain increases. A break only needs to last a minute or so to be effective. The maximum recommended sit time is 20 minutes (or less depending on how sitting affects your pain).



To find your best sit time:

- Next time you sit, time how long it takes before your pain just starts to increase.
- Subtract 2 minutes from this time.
- This is your best sit time!! Stick to it no matter where you are or what you are doing.

Plan your activities; pick a seat in an area where you can easily stand as needed.



Reminders

- One size does not fit everyone; make the chair fit you
- Use everyday items to make your chair fit
- Know what your body wants –sit in 90-90-90
- Don't sit for long periods of time without a break; 20 minutes is the maximum sit time
- Use a timer if necessary to monitor your sit time

Centre for Pain and Disability Management (CPDM)

Dr. L.A. Miller Centre
Eastern Health
100 Forest Road
St. John's, NL
A1A 1E5

Phone: 709-777-7048

Fax: 709-777-7046

© Eastern Health
June 2015

Chronic Pain and Sitting



Sitting can affect pain

Sitting for a long period of time is sometimes difficult for someone experiencing chronic pain. Many daily activities such as watching a movie, eating at a restaurant, or waiting for an appointment require sitting which can make pain worse.

People aren't made to sit; people are made to move. To make matters worse, chairs are a standard size and do not fit all people.

A part of managing pain better includes managing sitting activities better. Two key ways to do this are:

- Adjusting your sit position
- Adjusting your sit time

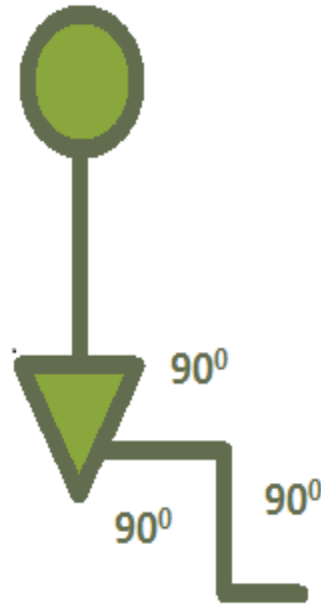
Adjusting your sit position

Like a stack of blocks, the body is most stable and feels the least amount of strain when it is in line with gravity. In sitting, this means your head is over your shoulders and the shoulders are over your hips.

In the ideal position:

- The weight of the body is felt on the "sit bones" in your buttocks.
- The thighs are level, the lower legs go straight down, and the feet are flat on the floor or a stool. This puts the hips, knees and ankles each at a 90° angle. This is called the 90-90-90 position.

The 90-90-90 Position



- Check the chair depth by looking at the back of your lower legs. If the chair pushes on the back of your lower legs, it is too deep and a cushion behind the back is needed.
- Check the angle of the back of the chair by comparing your shoulders to your hips. If your shoulders are behind your hips, an upper back rest is needed to bring your shoulders in line with your hips. A small roll can be added behind the low back for a little extra support.
- Finally, something under the forearms and elbows, such as a pillow, can make sitting more comfortable.

The following are common items that can be used to attain the ideal sit position

How to make a chair fit you

Follow these steps to adjust any chair and to position your body in the ideal position.

- Sit in the chair with your back resting against the back of the chair.
- Check the chair height by looking at your thighs. If your thighs slope down away from you, the chair is too high and a footstool is needed. If your thighs slope back toward you, the chair is too low and a seat rest is needed to increase your height.

- A telephone book or a Tupperware container makes a good footstool.
- A pillow, a jacket, or a few magazines makes a good seat rest.
- A coat, a sweater, a cushion, or a purse makes a good upper back rest.
- A small rolled towel or mittens inside a hat makes a good lower back roll.