

Office Ergonomics – How to Sit with Spondylolisthesis

What is Spondylolisthesis?

Spondylolisthesis is where one of the bones in your spine, called a vertebra, slips forward. This can happen anywhere along the spine, but it is more common in the lower back.

It can be painful and sitting can exasperate the discomfort due to the additional pressure placed on the lumbar spine where the slippage occurs.

It is therefore highly recommended to engage with Occupational Health for any employee who is in discomfort with spondylolisthesis.

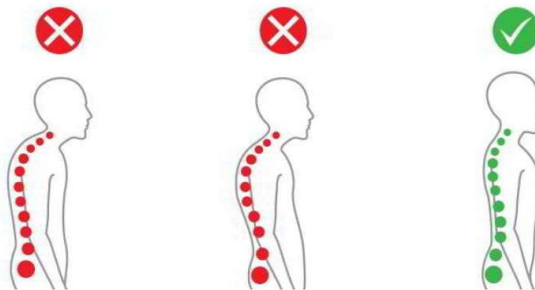
This guidance has been produced to support guidance for those managing spondylolisthesis with little to no discomfort. The aim of this document is to provide guidance to prevent discomfort at the workstation.

How Should I sit with Spondylolisthesis?

The best way to sit with spondylolisthesis is

1. Sit with a Neutral Spine.

This will take pressure off the lower spine.



2. Support Back

Ensure that the lower back is fully supported by the backrest of the chair. In the lower back you should feel a slight inward bend when seated. This needs to be supported by either an ergonomic chair or pillow. Pillows should be a temporary solution until a chair with lumbar support can be provided.

Identify any periods where the back comes away from the chair and look to close these gaps by adjusting the back rest of the chair.

3. Minimise Awkward Postures

Minimize any awkward postures such as bending, twisting or slouching by placing equipment at correct distance – screen/phone/mouse/notebooks close enough to avoid these postures.

- Uncross your legs
- Keep feet flat on the floor / use a footrest
- Keep your hips level on the seat pan (avoid using seat tilt)

4. Adjust your Posture



There are many different postures which will keep your back neutral and it would be good to go through different postures throughout your day.

Periodic postural changes gives your joints and muscles a respite from a built up of pressure and allows your blood to circulate in those areas. This can also help with healing.

- Reclined Sitting. With the backrest slightly reclined (100-110 degrees) while the back is fully rested on the backrest. Ensure that the lower back has a slight inward curve to it and that this is supported.
- Declined Sitting. Using forward tilt on the seat pan, sit at a downward sloping angle (ideally around 20 degrees) where the knees drop below hip level. This naturally shifts the hip forward to facilitate a neutral spine.
- Standing. This is an excellent working posture that makes it easy to maintain a neutral spine.

Research shows that switching between sitting and standing helped decrease lower back pain in participants. Participants were following best techniques for sitting and standing and changing posture and position frequently.

5. **Get up and Move Often**

Standing, walking, and certain stretches that alleviate the pressure placed on your vertebrae.

6. **Invest in an Ergonomic Chair**

A desk side assessment supported by the central Health, Safety & Welfare Team can help to identify the best ergonomic chair for you.

Next Steps

If in discomfort arrange for a referral to Occupational Health.

If little to no discomfort arrange for a formal desk side assessment by contacting the Health, Safety & Welfare Team: safetyadvice@gov.im

Further Information:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/spondylolisthesis/>

