

Sit Up and Take Notice

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Fitness balls are not safe for prolonged sitting.

Fitness balls, also known as Swiss, exercise, or physio balls, are used in training and rehabilitation programs to improve core strength and stability. But there's no scientific evidence that the fitness balls offer similar physical benefits when used as a replacement for your office chair. More importantly, they are inherently unstable and can therefore introduce a safety hazard into the workplace.

People sit at work to perform tasks that require concentration, posture, stability, and visual access, often up to eight hours a day. For these situations, seating should be supportive and not require excessive work to maintain the posture.

Short-term or intermittent use of fitness balls may be appropriate as part of a rehabilitation plan, but they should not be used as office chairs for prolonged sitting. Fitness balls are not safe for prolonged sitting.

If you suffer from back pain and are looking for ways to ease the strain at work, speak to your doctor about a strengthening program

Top 7 reasons fitness balls should not be used as office chairs:

- 1 You have a higher risk of falling when getting on and off or reaching from the ball.
- 2 You can't swivel or navigate your workspace while seated.
- 3 Your buttocks and thighs have insufficient support.
- 4 You don't have full seat or back support, making it difficult to maintain an upright posture.
- 5 You have minimal adjustability.
- 6 Your muscles are working excessively to maintain an upright posture.
- 7 You are literally exercising all day long, leading to increased fatigue.

For information on the optimal adjustment of your office chair, download the WorkSafeBC booklet *How to Make Your Computer Workstation Fit You* (www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/by_topic/assets/pdf/comptr_wrkstn.pdf).

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