

HOW TO ACHIEVE CORRECT POSTURE



Posture is the way we sit, stand, kneel, squat or walk and is determined by the body's structures, but it can also be influenced by genetic and emotional factors. Normal spine posture helps to reduce potential strain. However, our modern lifestyles, combined with forces of gravity, often affect our healthy upright posture. The habit of slouching can begin in childhood when we sit in front of the television and at school desks, slouching then continues into adulthood when we sit in front of computers and use laptops. Sitting and inactivity automatically worsens our posture, which may cause pain.

What Is Correct Posture?

Ordinary posture is normally considered as standing erect with the arms hanging loosely at the sides. A good rule of thumb to obtain a good posture is to assume the 'military position' and then ease off about 10%. It is a good idea to try to adopt this position approximately every 20 minutes as a way of improving your posture and eventually it should occur automatically. See fig. 1 to compare a poor, slumped posture versus a military one.

Basically, the military position involves:

- flattening your low back against a chair or wall
- rolling your shoulders back and down
- tucking in your chin while you glide your head backwards



Fig.1

Good Posture at the Desk

When you work at a desk or computer, it is important to adapt your surroundings to encourage a healthy posture. Firstly, experiment with the tilt of your chair. Tilt your chair so that the back of the seat is higher than the front. If your chair does not tilt, achieve the effect by using a foam wedge. If your desk is too low for you, it will produce a slumped posture.



Reading or writing may cause neck and shoulder over strain. A writing wedge or book support can prevent this strain. The keyboard and monitor should be directly in front of you so that you are not rotating your neck or low back. The monitor should be at eye level. When typing, your fingers should rest on the keyboard with your wrists straight, elbows bent at 90° and shoulders relaxed. Always take a break after 30 – 40 minutes of intense work and change your activity completely.

Do's and Don'ts at the Computer

DO.....

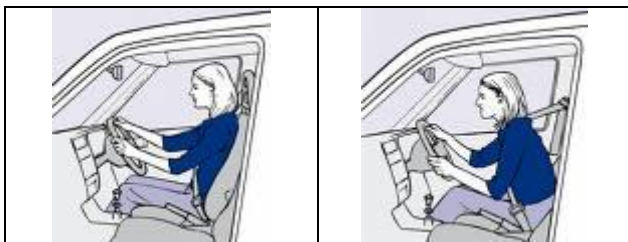
- Sit in a good chair with the arm rests if possible.
- Use adequate back support.
- Take regular breaks to rest eyes, neck and shoulders.
- Use a desk of appropriate height.
- Stand up and walk around at least once an hour.
- Loosen neck and shoulder when sitting.
- Relax wrists when typing.

DON'T...

- Slouch.
- Use a low desk or table.
- Sit for too long at one time.
- Tense your neck, shoulders or wrists.
- Cross your legs.

Correct Driving / Sitting Position

Driving or sitting in a car is one of the most common encountered situations. The best way to sit in a car is with your low back well supported and the seat back slightly reclined. The seat should be at a height that your hips are level with or slightly higher than your knees. It is important to have the seat far enough forwards so that you do not have to shrug your shoulders to reach the steering wheel. You should not feel the need to slouch forward.



Good Position

Bad Position

When sitting in a chair, the same basic rules apply. Make sure that your feet rest comfortably on the floor, do not cross your legs as it will put extra strain on your lower back and leg joints and use arm rests if available.

Body Weight and Posture

Overweight people often have poor posture. This may be because they feel awkward about their size. Excess weight puts more stress on the low back, joints and muscles. A good diet and regular exercise often quickly improved the pain and the posture.

Sleeping Posture.

The ideal sleeping posture is one in which all the normal spinal curves are maintained with minimum strain. The foetal position (lying on your side with your knees bent) achieves this quite easily. To avoid rolling forwards onto your stomach, place a pillow between your knees or thighs. If you prefer to sleep

on your back, placing a pillow under your knees will prevent your low back from over reaching.

Advantages of Good Posture

When you sit or stand, it is important that your shoulders are relaxed, back and down. This will prevent you slumping and pushing your head forward. Slumping can eventually lead to a permanent rounding of the upper back (Dowager's Hump), with the head jutting forwards. This can cause the muscles in the back of the neck and between the shoulder blades to become easily tired and strained. Many headaches, neck, shoulder, arm and shoulder blade pains are caused by this posture.

Sitting in a correct position will ensure that there is an even weight distribution through the vertebrae, making breathing more efficient as the diaphragm and upper part of the chest can be used, improve digestion as the lower abdomen is not being compressed, and result in more mobility and less strain on the back muscles.

Maintaining Good Posture

Your Chiropractor may be able to help you gain and maintain a healthy posture. Try this simple exercise frequently through the day, 20 – 30 seconds each time. It will help prevent some of the pain resulting from poor posture. Gently roll your shoulders back and down (by squeezing shoulder blades together), rotate your hands outward and tuck in your chin. Combining this exercise with the military positioning described earlier will help you to maintain a healthy posture.

How long you decide to benefit from Chiropractic care is, of course, always up to you, but for the effective long term results, always follow your Chiropractor's recommendations.

We Care About You

Please give this to a friend or colleague if you think Chiropractic may help them.

Have them call us on 01276 21637

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We Care About the Community