

**P**osture is the position in which you hold your body upright against gravity while standing, sitting or lying down. Good posture involves training the body to stand, walk, sit and lie in positions where the least strain is placed on supporting muscles and ligaments.

Good posture makes you look great, feel more energetic and project confidence. It also helps prevent injury and reduce pain. We all want good posture... but it can be so hard to achieve if you have poor posture. That's because acquiring good posture involves not only learning new movements and positions, but changing life-long habits as well.

Just knowing how to correct your posture is not enough to achieve a change in your actual habit. Your body uses learnt motor patterns to perform everyday activities. When you sit, stand, walk or move – your body follows previously learnt motor patterns. If your body has learned to slouch – that's what it will do.

### SLOUCH = OUCH

Want to truly 'take a load off'? Despite what the phrase suggests, the worst thing you can do – at least when it comes to the health of your back – is take a seat.

Sitting is becoming more prevalent while at work, or school and having a sedentary lifestyle can result in sitting for around 8 hours a day. Using a standing posture as a reference point at 100% of pressure, sitting unassisted with even good posture still increases pressure in your back to 140%. Sitting and slumping/slouching increases pressure on the lumbar discs to a whopping 185%. A position of forward leaning and rotating or twisting to the side increases the load on the back by an enormous 400%.

Reclining against a backrest (not pictured) reduces disc pressure by 50-80% though. Slouching also increases the risk of core muscle weakening which, ironically, predisposes you to more lower back problems. Added to this, with slouching often comes a forward head posture. For every 2.5 cm of forward positioning of your head, approximately 3.5kg of additional load is placed on your neck.

Correct sitting posture includes:

- Sit up with your back straight and your shoulders back. Your buttocks should touch the back of your chair.
- All 3 normal back curves should be present while sitting. You can use a small,

# Sit Tall

rolled-up towel or a lumbar roll to help maintain the normal curves in your lower back.

- Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.
- Bend your knees at a right angle. Keep your knees even with or slightly higher than your hips. (Use a foot rest or stool if necessary.) Do not cross your legs.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor.
- Try to avoid sitting in the same position for more than 30 minutes.
- At work, adjust your chair height and work station so that you can sit up close to your work and tilt it up towards you. Rest your elbows and arms on your chair or desk, keeping your shoulders relaxed.
- When sitting in a chair that rolls and pivots, don't twist at the waist while sitting. Instead, turn your whole body.
- When standing up from the sitting position, move to the front of the chair. Stand up by straightening your legs. Avoid bending forward at your waist. Immediately stretch your back by doing 10 standing backbends.

### CORRECT DRIVING POSITION

- Use a back support (lumbar roll) at the curve of your lower back. Your knees should be at the same level or higher than your hips.
- Move the seat close to the steering

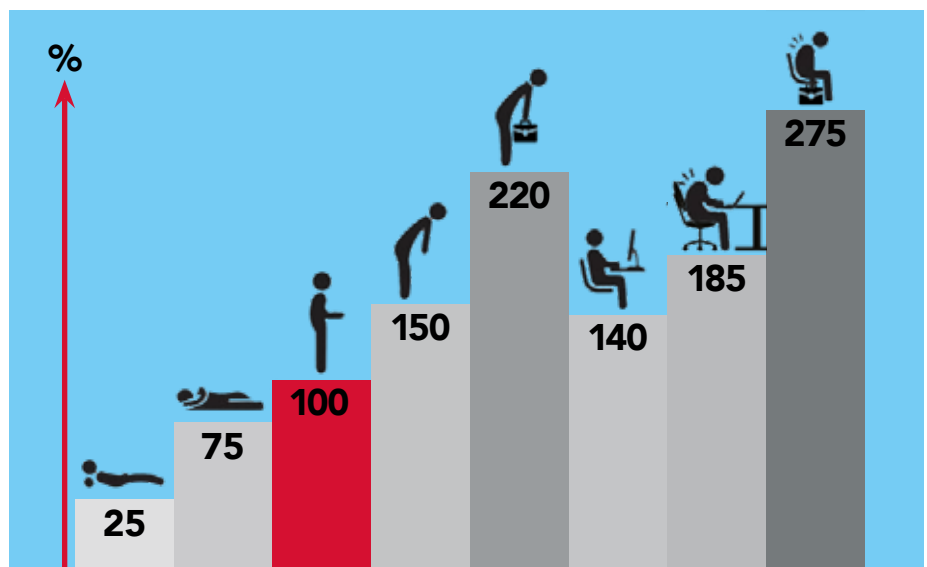


wheel to support the curve of your back. The seat should be close enough to allow your knees to bend and your feet to reach the pedals.

In order to truly 'take a load off' you need to have regular breaks from sitting, every 20-30 minutes stand up and walk around. Use a standing or sit-stand desk where possible. Your physical therapist or occupational health adviser can advise you and guide you through correct desk set up to help support a good sitting posture.

Physical therapy can also teach you exercises to strengthen your core and upper back, allowing you to sustain a good sitting posture, without succumbing to lazy slouching. Even doing some exercises in your chair can help move your neck and back, or relieve tension, avoiding pain and bad sitting postures.

As a human, you were designed to move from posture to posture to avoid muscle fatigue and abnormal sustained tissue loading. This means that your best posture is your next posture.



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