

Posture

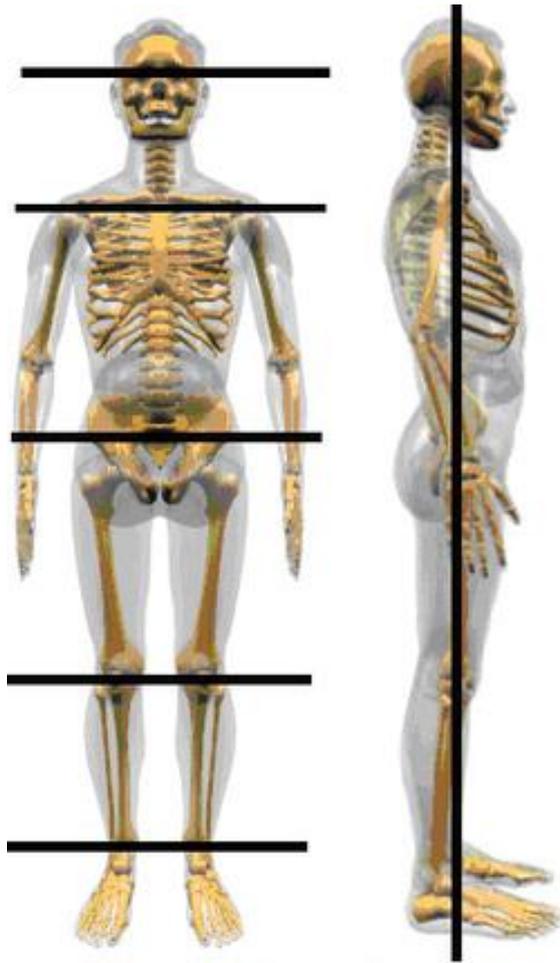
Staff Information Leaflet

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This leaflet is designed to give you an understanding of posture and some advice on what you can do to help yourself. If your symptoms persist you should seek advice from your GP or Occupational health service.

The Importance of Good Posture

- Maintaining a good posture can help to keep your joints healthy. It is also beneficial for your internal organs and helps you to breathe more easily.



There are many things that can lead to poor posture:

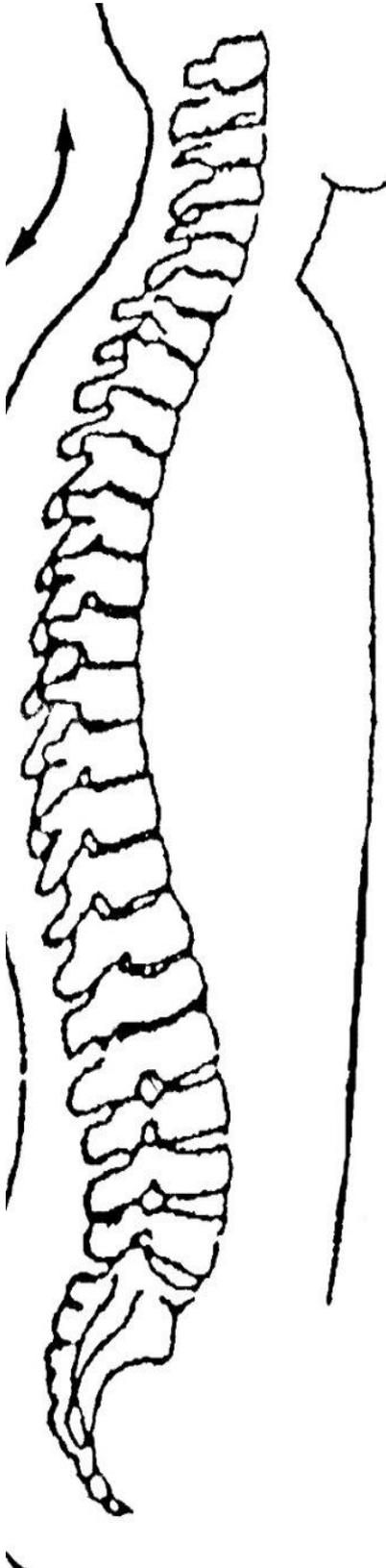
- Bad habits such as slouching
- Stiff joints and weak muscles
- Poor level of physical (aerobic) fitness
- Moving and handling incorrectly
- Stress and anxiety
- Fatigue
- Obesity
- Pain

The Effect of Poor Posture on the Body

- Joints and muscles can become painful when positioned badly.
- Badly positioned joints cause the surrounding muscles to work inefficiently, leading to fatigue, pain and potentially injury.
- The muscles eventually adapt to the bad posture making it more difficult to correct and relieve the pain.

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The Ideal Posture



The ideal posture is a subtle 'S' shape. From the back, your spine will appear straight. From the side it should have three natural curves, an inward curve in your neck, an outward curve around your ribs and an inward curve in your lower back. Your spine is at its strongest in this position

Ideal posture is not limited to the spine. Other big joints such as the shoulders, hips and knees play a big part in achieving good posture.

We all have slight variations to the ideal posture type that do not cause us any problems. However, there is a critical point when poor posture starts to cause problems.

It is vitally important to change our position regularly!

Changing position or doing gentle movement every 15-20 minutes is recommended to prevent the joints stiffening or the muscles fatiguing e.g. standing up if you are sitting down or reaching up if you have been working with your arms by your sides.

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What can I do to help myself?

Correcting Poor Posture

This takes time and only you can do it. Therapists can advise you and teach you exercises that help improve your posture but you must be committed to self-manage and apply these changes to all areas of your life, long term. Initially it may feel strange or hard work to correct your posture. This is normal. It takes time and practice to strengthen the muscles and teach them how to adopt a new position.

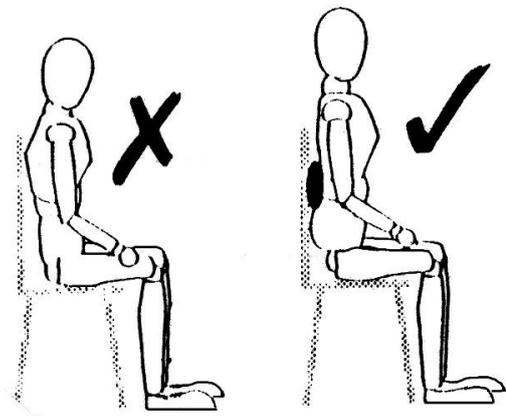
Exercises

Try sitting or standing as tall as possible for 10 seconds every 20 – 30 minutes. Use prompts to remind you. Think of things that occur frequently throughout the day and use them to remind you to correct your posture or change your position e.g. the telephone ringing or boiling a kettle.

Gradually build up the time you hold your good posture. The muscles will strengthen over time and it will start to feel much easier.

Sitting Posture

The key to good sitting posture is maintaining your spinal curves. Ensure you are sitting back in the chair and your feet are supported either on the floor or on a foot rest. You should be sat on the bony points in your buttocks (the ischial tuberosities) and your lower back should feel supported. You can support the lumbar curve at the base of your spine with a small lumbar roll, cushion or rolled up towel.



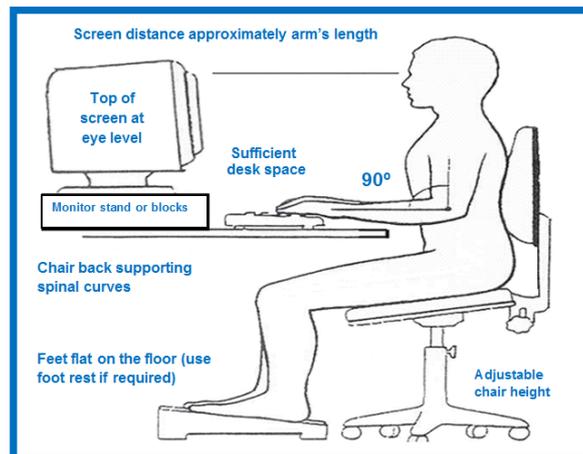
Remember to change position regularly to avoid stiffening the joints and fatiguing the muscles, even if you are in a good position!

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Sitting at work

Ensure you sit back in the chair avoiding 'perching' on the end of the seat. The chair should be height adjusted to your individual needs and your feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest. Ensure your eye level is at the top of the screen and you are close to the desk with your shoulders relaxed.

Below is a diagram of the recommended work station set up:

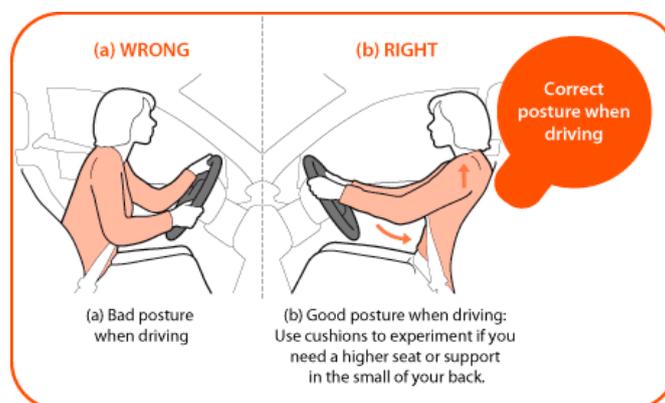


For more detailed advice see the Work Station Staff Information Leaflet. Or for a video on how to correctly set up your work station please see the link below:

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/workplacehealth/Pages/howtositcorrectly.aspx#video>

Driving Posture

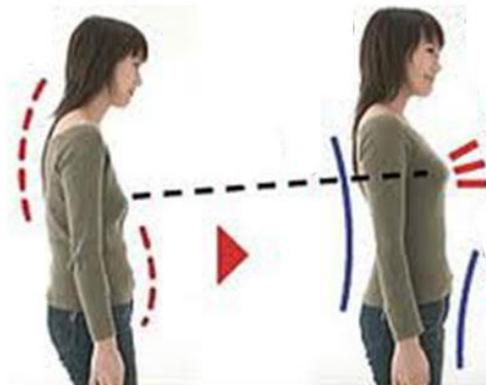
Avoid sitting slumped in the car seat and driving for too long without a break. When driving, try a rolled up towel or lumbar roll in the small of your back (see sitting posture section). Move the car seat closer to the steering wheel to limit over stretching your arms and shoulders when steering and using the gear stick. Interrupt a long journey with regular breaks, which allow you to get out of the car and stretch out into a more upright posture.



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Standing Posture

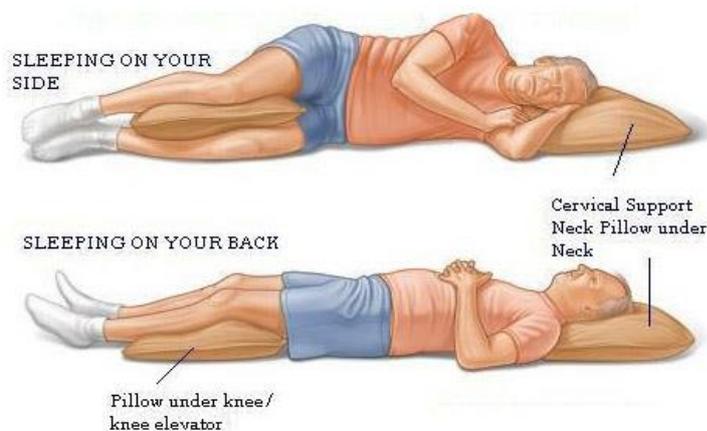
The key to a good standing posture is to think tall! Your weight should be distributed evenly through your feet and the knees softened and not locked out. Lift your chest and gently pull your shoulders back, imagining that a string in the middle of your head is pulling you up tall. Try not to over exert these movements; you should still feel relaxed and natural.



Lying Posture

There is no perfect position for sleeping. However, there are positions that you may find more comfortable as they keep your spine in a neutral position.

- Side lying with 1 pillow supporting your neck and 1 pillow between your legs maintains a neutral spine and supports your hips and knees (see diagram below).
- Lying on your back with 1 pillow supporting your neck and 1 pillow below your legs to slightly elevate the knees, helps to relieve pressure from the spine (see diagram below).



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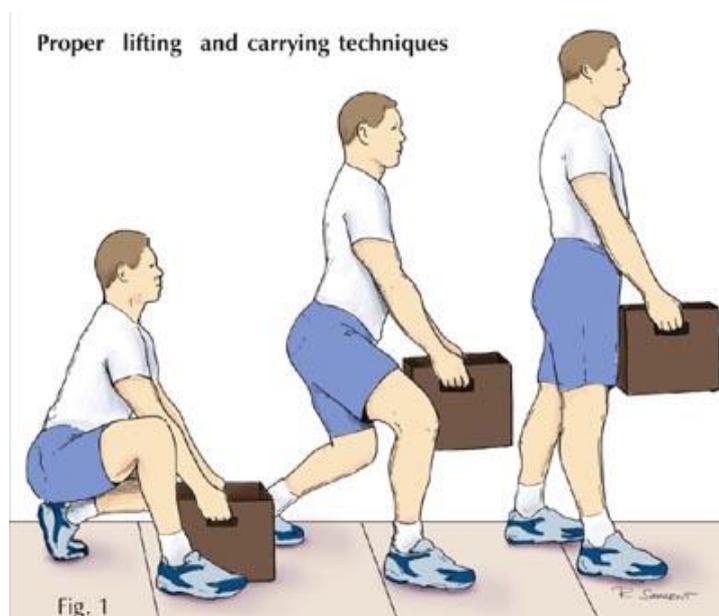
- Avoid resting your head on lots of pillows when lying on your back as this can make the neck sore. However, an extra pillow can be more comfortable if you lie on your side (see diagram below).



- Sleep on a mattress that is firm, yet soft enough to conform to the normal curves of the body. Some people find a mattress topper useful.

Bending and Lifting Posture

When performing any manual handling task, including bending, lifting, pushing and pulling, we should use the **POWER POSITION**. This is the position that sports people and soldiers use to give them power and speed. This position will help to maintain your normal spinal curves, keeping you in the strongest position for you to be able to protect yourself as you go about your task.



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To adopt the power position (as the diagram depicts) stand with:

- Your feet about shoulder width apart
- One foot slightly in front of the other
- Hips and knees bent
- Bottom out
- Head up and chest up
- Your three natural spinal curves maintained
- Stomach braced

In addition to adopting the correct posture you must also obey the four key principles of correct body mechanics when doing any bending, lifting or moving and handling task. These are:

- Use your legs
- Keep the load close
- Keep your spine in a neutral position
- Do NOT twist

What should I do if I am still experiencing problems?

If you feel your posture is having a detrimental effect on your health or your work performance despite following this advice then your Occupational Health team can help. The Occupational Health team can advise you on your posture at work and can assess your workstation if this is believed to be appropriate.

You can also gain access to the Occupational Health physiotherapist by:

Self referral

The Occupational Health service provides assessment and treatment of musculoskeletal problems that affect your ability to work. Staff are able to self refer to physiotherapy via the intranet Occupational Health web page

<http://nuth-vintranet1/cms/SupportServices/OccupationalHealth.aspx>

Management referral

If you feel your symptoms are having significant effect on your ability to carry out your role, discuss this with your manager and request a referral to the Occupational Health Physiotherapy team. The physiotherapist can assess you and advise you on how to keep safe at work and avoid further problems. Any information you share will be considered confidential and will only be passed on with your permission.

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For more information on posture or how to stay active, follow the links below:



www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx



www.nhsinform.co.uk



www.activenewcastle.co.uk

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