

Perfect Posture

The British Chiropractic Association offers advice to keep you standing tall

Having and maintaining a good posture is a major step in preventing back pain. With us all leading such busy lifestyles often the basic warning signs of back problems can go unnoticed. Of course, no one is immune from back pain but the British Chiropractic Association can help. By following a series of simple guidelines, which can be incorporated into everyday lives, you can help to reduce the risk of back pain.

Tim Hutchful, a chiropractor from the British Chiropractic Association says: "The ideal posture would allow for a plumb line to hang straight through your ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle. Try and stand relaxed, but gently contracting your abdominal muscles. When sitting the same is true, the gravity line should pass thorough ear, shoulder and hip.

The British Chiropractic Association makes the following recommendations for maintaining a good posture:

Give your posture a sporting chance

Unaccustomed exercise can put you at risk of back pain. You might only play a relaxed low-risk sport once a week but you still need to prepare yourself sufficiently - mentally and physically. Warming up and warming down is essential to ensure that your joints and muscles don't get a shock. Strong abdominal muscles can help to prevent a potential bad back.

Don't just sit there

Lack of exercise is your worst enemy. Regular exercise is essential, as the fitter you are, the less likely you are to injure yourself. Simple activity such as stretching and shoulder shrugging all helps to keep your back in line. Do not sit for prolonged periods.

Don't drive yourself around the bend

On the school run or picking up the monthly shop, the last thing on our minds is the state of our backs while in the driving seat. But there is almost twice as much pressure on your back when you are sitting incorrectly than there is if you stand up. So relax - a relaxed driving position reduces stress on the spine, allow your seat to take your weight, try and make sure you are sitting as far back in the car seat as possible so it can support you fully.

Sit up straight in front of the TV

When you are relaxing in front of the box, the tendency is to "slouch" when sitting. The ideal sitting position is to let the seat take your weight so if possible keep as much of your body in contact with the chair so that your whole body is supported.

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Carry with care

Be aware of the potential dangers of putting more strain on one side of the body more than the other. Any bag that sheds equal weight on both shoulders is preferred, so if you can carry items in a rucksack – do it! Adjust the straps of a bag to keep it as close to the back as possible, which ensures weight is evenly distributed across the back.

Footloose and fancy free

Having good footwear is an essential part of having a good posture – a factor that is often overlooked. Soft-soled shoes, which are supportive and have a good grip, are recommended.

Perfect PC posture

Huge amounts of people spend hours in front of a PC each day - make sure you are sitting comfortably and have your spine supported. Don't forget to move around, limit yourself to forty-minute sittings and take regular breaks. If possible have your arms supported.

And so to bed

Try and adopt a sleeping position which creates less physical stress on the back first thing in the morning. For example, lay on your side and not on your front with your neck twisted. When you wake up, wake your body up and try some gentle stretches like drawing your knees to your chest.

Overall, your back is most at risk when either embarking on an unaccustomed burst of activity, or during a mundane activity where you pay less attention to your posture. Regular exercise and awareness is key to maintaining a healthy back - just keep thinking of that plumb line!

REMEMBER, PAIN IS A WARNING SIGN - DO NOT IGNORE IT

Chiropractors treat problems with your joints, bones and muscles, and the effects they have on your nervous system. Working on all the joints of your body, concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make gentle, specific adjustments (the chiropractic word for manipulation) to improve the efficiency of your nervous system and release your body's natural healing ability. Chiropractic does not involve the use of any drugs or surgery.

For more information or to find a BCA chiropractor in your local area:

The British Chiropractic Association

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Website: www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk

Members of the British Chiropractic Association (BCA) abide by a strict code of ethics and the association only accepts members who have graduated from an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education after a minimum of four years full-time training. The BCA ensures its chiropractors maintain high standards of conduct, practice, education and training. Like medical practitioners and dentists, all chiropractors are registered by law.

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