HOW TO ADOPT A CORRECT SITTING POSTURE

Adopting the correct sitting position is essential for maintaining good posture and a healthy back and spine. Sitting with a straight back and shoulders will not only improve a person's physical health but can make them feel more confident.

Many people spend the majority of their day sitting down as they tend to sit when commuting, working in an office or studying, and relaxing at home. Prolonged sitting can cause a range of adverse health effects, including bad posture and back health.

What is good posture?
- Good posture is important whether sitting or standing.
- Good posture means that the key parts of a person's body are correctly aligned and supported by the right amount of muscle tension.

Correct posture can help by:
- Reducing strain on the body during movement and exercise
- Reducing wear and tear on the joints, muscles, and ligaments
- Maintaining balance while moving and exercising
- Reducing the risk of muscle strain and overuse conditions
- Improving spine health

Best sitting position
The best sitting position depends on a person's height, the chair they are using, and the activity they are doing while sitting.

A person can improve posture and achieve a proper sitting position by:
- Keeping feet flat or resting them on either the floor or a footrest
- Avoiding crossing knees or ankles
- Maintaining a small gap between the back of the knees and the chair
- Positioning knees at the same height or slightly lower than the hips
- Placing ankles in front of the knees
- Relaxing the shoulders
- Keeping the forearms and knees parallel to the floor where possible
- Holding elbows at the sides creating an l-shape in the arms
- Sitting up straight and looking forward without straining the neck
- Keeping the back against the chair, or using a backrest or cushion if there are places where the back does not comfortably meet the chair, especially in the lower back region
- Avoiding sitting for long periods at a time, ideally taking at least a 10-minute break for every hour of sitting

Tips for sitting posture at a computer
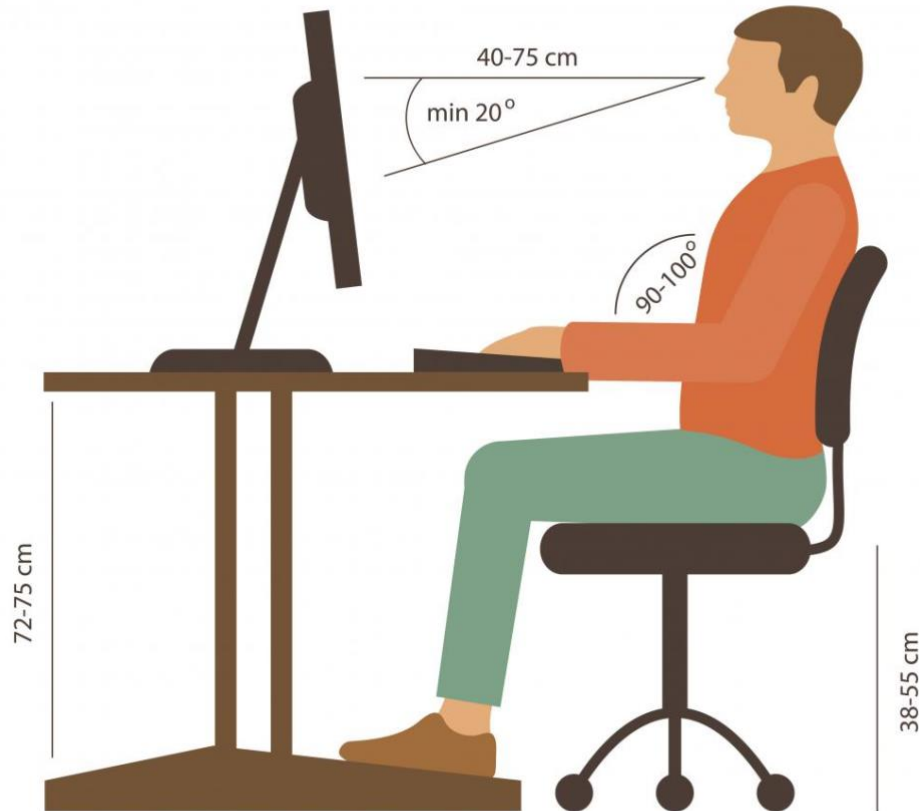
This diagram demonstrates how to achieve good posture when sitting at a desk.

People who have to sit for extended periods at a desk because of their work or schooling need to take extra precautions to make sure they maintain a healthy posture and back.

When working at a computer for long periods, a person can help improve their sitting posture by:

- Keeping the monitor at arm's length and no more than 2 inches above the natural line of sight
- Customising workspaces, for example adding footrests, wrist pads, or backrests
- Using a standing desk to alternate between sitting and standing
- Using an ergonomic chair, a yoga ball, or a knee chair
- Trying out different keyboard and mouse types
- Using a headset for long calls or dictating to reduce neck strain
- Positioning the keyboard and mouse close together to avoid reaching
- Getting up and moving around occasionally, especially when experiencing any muscle or joint pain

Once in the correct position, try doing a mental check every 10 to 15 minutes to see if the posture has altered and then correct any changes.

Sitting positions to avoid
Anything that causes a misuse or overuse of specific muscles, ligaments, or tendons can adversely impact a person's posture and back health. Certain positions are worse than others for overworking or misusing postural tissues, especially some sitting positions.

To prevent bad posture and back health avoid:
- Sitting slumped to one side with the spine bent
- Keeping the knees, ankles, or arms crossed
- Dangling or not properly supporting the feet
- Sitting for a long time in one position
- Straining the neck for long periods while looking at a monitor, telephone screen, or document
- Sitting in a position that does not fully support the back, especially the lower back
- Sitting for an extended period without taking a break

Other ways to improve posture
Standing up and stretching regularly may help to prevent back pain.

Everyday tips for a healthy posture and back include:
- Exercising for at least 30 minutes three times a week, focusing on a mix of stretching, strengthening, and aerobic activities
- Trying not to stay in any one position for too long, changing position or activity every hour
- Using a hands-free device for long calls
- Keeping any screens at eye or chest level when reading to reduce neck and upper back strain
- Sitting up straight and looking directly forward when reading mobile screens or monitors
- Lifting heavy objects by bending the legs rather than using the back
- Keeping heavy loads close to the body when lifting or carrying them
- Adjusting the seat when driving to support the back without straining and to allow the knees to bend
- Placing lumbar support cushions on seats, including car seats, thus reducing lower back strain
- Wearing comfortable, supportive, or orthopaedic shoes when standing for long periods of time
- Walking with a straight spine and trying to avoid slumping or leaning
- Swinging the arms briskly and evenly when walking, jogging, or running
- Building up key muscle groups when away from the computer by doing squats, lunges, jumping jacks, shoulder shrugs, and push ups