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Mind Your Posture: General Advice

Having and maintaining a good posture is a major step in preventing back pain. When leading a busy lifestyle, the basic warning signs of back problems can go unnoticed. Of course no one is immune from back pain, but the British Chiropractic Association has some simple advice to help.

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

Give your posture a sporting chance

- Any 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 potentially help to prevent a bad back.

Don't just sit there

- A 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 activities such as stretching and shoulder shrugging can all help to keep your back in line.
- Do not sit for prolonged periods.

Don't drive yourself around the bend

- Driving long distances for work, on the school run or picking up the monthly shop, the last thing on our minds is the state of our backs whilst in the driving seat. There is almost twice as much pressure on your back when you are sitting

incorrectly than there is if you stand up. 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 TV, the tendency is to 'slouch' when sitting. The ideal sitting position is to let the seat take your weight and, if possible, keep as much of your body in contact with the chair so that your whole body is supported.

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 spreads 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. Soft-soled shoes, which are supportive and have a good grip, are recommended.

Perfect PC posture

- A lot 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 shift position from time to time.
- Limit yourself to forty-minutes sitting at a time 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, try some gentle stretches, such as drawing your knees to your chest, before getting out of bed.

Further information about chiropractic can be obtained by logging on to **www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk**

For further information contact the
British Chiropractic Association on 0118 950 5950