

GOOD POSTURE: IS IT IMPORTANT?

Everyone has no doubt been told by their parents or their teachers “Sit up straight”. This notion of good posture remains as important today, since poor posture is frequently the origin of several physical complaints. Since the arrival of computers in the work milieu, many people spend a lot of time sitting in front of a computer and unfortunately, also lead a sedentary lifestyle. This combination of factors weakens the muscles of the trunk (abdominal and back muscles) and contributes to poor posture.

Low back pain, neck pain, shoulder pain and even headaches are often related to poor posture. Sitting with a round back, in a chair without back support or sitting on the edge of a chair or in soft chairs, increases tension in the back and projects the head forward. This head position stretches the muscles of the neck and compresses the upper part of the neck, which may contribute to headache.

Physiotherapists suggest the following for good sitting posture:

1. Choose a firm chair with a back support.
2. Make sure your feet touch the floor while you are sitting against the back of the chair.
3. Place a folded towel to fill in the gap in the lower back and lean back against the towel so that the back is well supported.
4. Lift the sternum up and forward for good alignment of the mid-back.
5. Keep the chin in line with the sternum and pull the top of the head towards the ceiling, as if you are suspended.

For good standing posture, it is important to:

1. Gently pull in the tummy and lift the sternum up as if you had a string pulling your sternum up and forward towards the ceiling.
2. Do not hyper-extend your knees backwards.
3. Keep your weight equally distributed on both feet.
4. Bring the shoulders in line with the hips
5. Pull the top of the head towards the ceiling and don't forget to breathe...

If a good proportion of your day is spent in the sitting position, it is a good idea to choose physical activity that requires other positions in order to change the tensions on your muscles and your spine. You may choose activities such as swimming, walking, cross-country skiing, or skating. Riding a bicycle would not be the best choice because you would still be in a sitting position.

Good posture will improve the mobility of your spine and your joints. To facilitate good posture, you must have good muscles and to develop these, you must stay active! If you need to strengthen the muscles of your trunk and you would like to do it safely, do not hesitate to communicate with a physiotherapist. Physiotherapists are experts in this field.