PATIENT HOME-CARE GUIDE

Posture Basics

For Better Back Health

MYTH **THE PERFECT SITTING POSTURE IS ELBOWS, HIPS, AND KNEES AT 90°**

TRUTH **THE IDEAL SITTING POSTURE IS A VARIABLE POSTURE.** Sitting with hips, knees, and elbows at 90 degrees can be a useful sitting position, but for no longer than about 20 minutes. Holding those angles all day creates sustained tissue loads on the back.



THE PRINCIPLE Change position every 20-30 minutes, or sooner if discomfort begins, to avoid over-stressing the muscles and other tissues in your back. Rotate among positions that feel comfortable and do not reproduce your symptoms.

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BACK TROUBLE DURING PROLONGED SITTING

1 USE AN ERGONOMIC CHAIR

Ergonomic chairs are great, but many people don't know how to use them properly and therefore don't get all the benefits of using one. A good ergonomic chair is one that makes it easy to change your posture over a variety of angles. As stated above, the goal is to change your posture frequently. Here are some additional acceptable postures to switch between:



LEANING BACK



FEET ON THE DESK



LEGS CROSSED



KNEES CROSSED

2 GET OUT OF THE CHAIR - BREAK THE SITTING CYCLE

There really is nothing better for good back health than getting out of the chair. Stretching while sitting just is not adequate. A good rest break must consist of doing the opposite activity to that which is stressing the back. So if you sit for long periods of time, you need to stand to allow the tissues to stretch out again. Look for opportunities to stand up. For example, stand while talking on the phone, go refill your water bottle, make some photocopies, etc.



3 PERFORM AN EXERCISE ROUTINE AT SOME TIME DURING THE WORK DAY

Stretching throughout the day is good to break up long periods of sitting, but a good exercise routine to strengthen the back is also important. The ideal time of the day would be midday, but do it whenever you can. Avoid exercise during the first 1-2 hours after getting out of bed to reduce the risk of back injury. (See the handouts on Core Stabilization for a good daily routine.)

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Stretches

THE 20-30 MINUTE RESET

Change position or take a brief movement break every 20-30 minutes, before stiffness builds - even 30-60 seconds helps. Stand, walk, breathe, adjust your chair, refill your water bottle, go to the copy machine, etc. You can also use the stretches below.

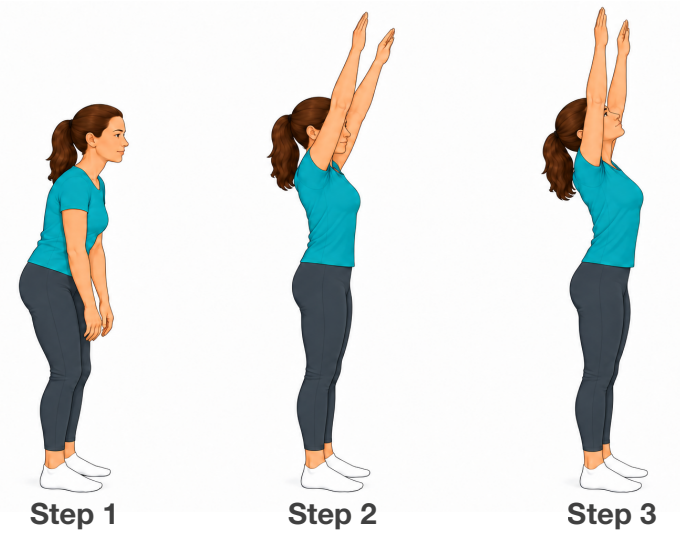
STRETCHES TO REDUCE BACK STRESS DURING PROLONGED SITTING

For Lower Back

1 STANDING STRETCH BREAK

- **Step 1** - Stand up from your chair. It's normal to feel slightly hunched forward after sitting for a long time. Gently straighten up and maintain a relaxed standing posture for 10-20 seconds.
- **Step 2** - Slowly raise the arms over the head, pushing the hands toward the ceiling.
- **Step 3** - Continue to reach up to the ceiling until you stand upright with a slight curve in the lower back. While holding this position, inhale deeply to further relax the back.

Hold 5-10 seconds | Repeat 3-5 times



For Upper Back / Chest (helps with slouching)

2 HANDS-BEHIND-HEAD PECTORAL STRETCH

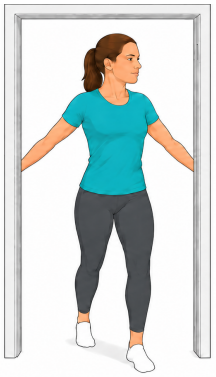
- Sit tall with feet supported. Lightly interlace your fingers behind the base of your head.
- Keep your chin level and shoulders down. Gently guide the elbows backward to open the chest.
- Do not pull on your head or force your low back into a large arch.



Hold 5-10 seconds | Repeat 3-5 times

3 DOORWAY PECTORAL STRETCH

- Place both hands or forearms on the door frame of an open doorway a little above waist level.
- Keep your torso tall and take a small step forward until you feel a gentle stretch across the chest.
- Step back to release. Repeat as directed.



Hold 10-20 seconds | Repeat 2-3 times

4 BRUEGGER'S RELIEF POSITION

- Sit near the front of a stable chair with feet flat and slightly apart.
- Lift thee chest softly; draw shoulders down and back. Turn palms forward/up with thumbs ou and fingers spread.
- Breathe normally. Stay relaxed rather than forcing a rigid military posture.

Hold 5-10 seconds | Repeat 3-5 times



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