



Sitting Pretty

Good Posture Boosts Energy!

You may think it's more comfortable and restful to slouch while using your keyboard, or to lean on your desk with your elbows while reading. But in the long run, it isn't.

In fact, poor posture, the stress of leaning over paperwork and straining to peer at computer screens may eventually cause you to experience muscle tension, stiffness, backaches, neck cramps and fatigue. Such habits can even lead to more serious problems, such as spine disorders or pinched nerves.

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Posture Problems

Slouching can overstretch the ligaments that support your spine, causing backache and fatigue. Cradling a telephone handset between your head and shoulder can give you a stiff, sore neck. Sitting in one position for long periods (an aspect of posture many people overlook) can reduce circulation in your muscles, increasing fatigue and stiffness and setting you up for injury.

The Principles of Good Posture

Here are the major components of healthy—and energizing—posture:

- Whether sitting or standing, keep your ears, shoulders and hips “stacked” in a straight line. This will keep the three natural curves

of your spine in their normal, balanced alignment.

- Adjust your chair height so that your feet are flat on the floor or on a foot stool. Avoid crossing your legs. Slide your chair under your desk or workstation so you won't have to lean too far forward. If your chair is at a comfortable height, your knees will be level with or slightly lower than your hips. Support your low back with the back of your chair. If further support is needed, use a cushion, lumbar roll or rolled up towel and place it in the small of your back.
- Place books and papers you need to read or type from in a bookstand or document holder the same distance from you as your computer screen. Raise or lower such documents, as well as your computer screen, so the tops are at or slightly below eye level.
- Instead of cradling a phone handset between your head and shoulder, use a headset or speakerphone or simply hold it to your ear with a free hand.
- Take stretch breaks about once an hour. Avoid getting “hypnotized” by your computer screen for hours at a time. Stand up, breathe deeply, stretch and shake out the kinks. Just a few minutes an hour should get your circulation going and keep you limber.

Doing It the Right Way

You may accomplish a lot at work in spite of bad posture, but you'll get a surprising energy boost and be able to accomplish even more when you practice good posture. And good posture applies not only while sitting, but also while standing, bending, lifting or reaching. Good posture contributes to deep breathing, healthy organ function and good circulation—all great energy boosters. It may take a little practice, but the return in comfort and energy will go a long way toward helping you look and feel your best.