

BIRDWELL CLINIC PHYSIOTHERAPY

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POSTURE AND YOUR BACK

Are you constantly hearing that you should sit up straight? Do you really understand what that means? Our physiotherapy clinic sees a large number of people with back and neck problems, where poor posture has been a contributing factor. Poor posture can also contribute to other problems such as shoulder, arm and leg pains.

So what is posture?

Posture refers to the body's alignment and positioning in relation to gravity. Whether we are standing, sitting or lying down gravity exerts a force on our joints, ligaments and muscles.

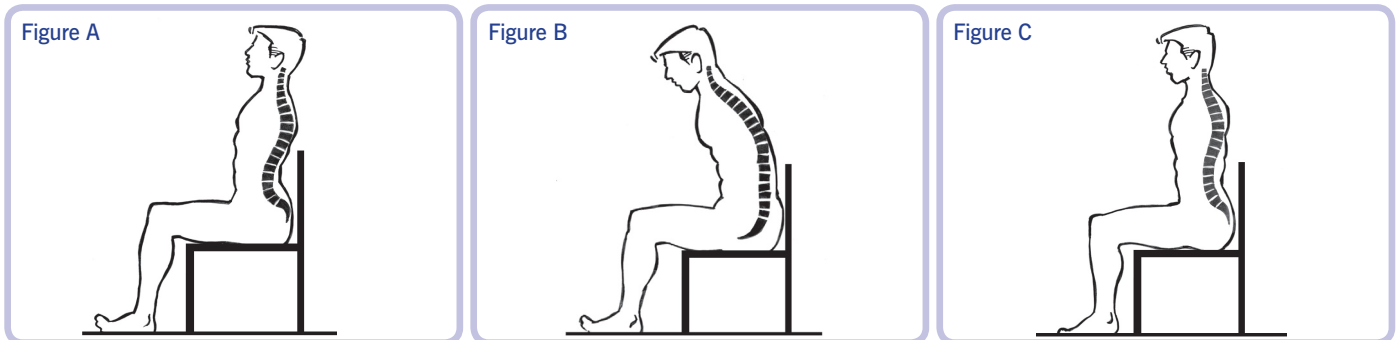
Good posture means your muscles have to do the least amount of work to hold you up against gravity and the force of gravity is evenly distributed so that no particular area is overstressed. **Poor posture** will mean your body is less resistant to the strains and stresses we experience over the months, years and decades of life. Sitting for long periods with a slumped posture can cause a variety of postural pains such as neck ache, shoulder ache, elbow or wrist pain, and low backache. It can also cause stiffness when getting up from sitting. Standing or walking with poor posture will also cause postural pains such as leg pain, knee pain, and low backache.

Being aware of good posture is the first step to breaking old poor postural habits and reducing stress and strain on your spine. It will help you reduce any postural pains you may experience day to day, and help to prevent any more serious problems developing. Your posture will vary depending on whether you are standing or sitting. You will often find that your posture is worse in sitting but better when you stand. Therefore you must become aware of it whatever position you are in.

How to find the ideal spinal posture

The natural curvature of the spine is controlled by movement of the pelvis. In order to maintain the natural curves of the spine, you must place the pelvis in a neutral position. In Pilates Exercise people are taught to adopt this **Neutral Pelvis Position**. The neutral pelvis refers to a position half way between its two extremes of movement.

Try this short exercise



- 1 Sit on the edge of a chair with your feet on the floor. Place your hands around the top edge of your pelvis with your fingers facing forward and your thumbs at the back. Keep your neck, shoulders and stomach relaxed.
- 2 Imagine you are holding the top of a bucket around the rim on each side.
- 3 Tilt your pelvis forward so your lower back arches and your belly protrudes a little so the bucket is going to spill water out in front of you. (See fig A)
- 4 Now tip your pelvis backwards so your lower back rounds. Your bucket will be spilling water out behind you. (See fig B)
- 5 Finally, bring your 'bucket' halfway between these two extremes. This is your **NEUTRAL** pelvis position. This is the optimum position for your pelvis to be in so that your back and stomach are not compromised. You will also notice that your shoulders and neck naturally adopt a correct position. (See fig C)

Try practicing maintaining this neutral position when you are sitting or standing for long periods. It is important when finding the ideal spinal posture to adopt this neutral pelvis position first. This can be applied when sitting or standing or bending to lift. If you continue to experience postural pains or they worsen then call one of our physiotherapists to see if physiotherapy can help.

Call us now on
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