

## Good Posture – The Basics...



# The best posture is the next posture

Below are principles of good sitting posture but as was recently pointed out in an article in the Guardian <sup>\*</sup>, good posture is a myth. That is to say that the premise of good posture, being that there is one 'correct' way to sit and that deviation away from this is incorrect and, in some way, 'bad' or harmful, is simply not true for a number of reasons. These include genetic variations that make us all different: what is good posture for one, may not be good for someone else.

The primary reason for health issues associated with working on Display Screen Equipment (DSE) is exposure to DSE use, in other words, time at the workstation, either over the course of a working day or accumulative over a working week/month/year; so, before we look at the principles of sitting 'correctly' consider that the best thing you can do to reduce your risk of back strain or other ailments, is take breaks.

Some general points regarding breaks are:

- Breaks should be taken when performance and productivity are still at a maximum, before the user starts getting tired.
- Appropriate timing of the break is more important than its length with short, frequent breaks being more satisfactory than occasional, longer breaks. A break every 30-40 minutes is recommended with the duration flexible. As little as 2-5 minutes has been shown to be effective.
- If possible, breaks should be taken away from the computer workstation, and allow the user to stand up, move about and/or change posture.
- Changes of activity (time spent doing other tasks not using the computer) are more effective than formal rest breaks in relieving visual fatigue.

\* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/mar/05/are-you-sitting-comfortably-the-myth-of-good-posture>



Try to engage in 'Flexible Working' practices.

# Neutral Sitting Posture

So, although we might reject the overall concept of one specific posture being good and that which we should all strive for, there are advantages, when spending a prolonged time in one position, to maintaining a 'neutral' spinal position; that it sitting so as to minimise strain on the joints of the spine. This neutral position is that of an S-Shape with a slight curve inward in the lower back and a gentle outward curve in the upper back. The key to achieving this when sitting, is your chair set up and use. Follow the following principles...

- Start off with your **seat height** and set this so that your elbows are level with your keyboard or the top of the desk, this way you are able to operate your input devices without compromising your shoulder or arm posture.
- If your feet are not supported at this sitting height, you may need a footrest. If your knees are higher than your knees at this sitting height, you may need a higher desk.
- Next set the **optimum level of recline**. Aim to have your ears level with your shoulders and when relaxing in the chair, your shoulders should naturally rest on the back rest. If the recline is excessive, you will find your head coming forward and you may lean forward away from the back rest; if the recline is insufficient (the back is too straight), it will take excessive effort to maintain shoulder contact with the chair.
- If the **height of the back rest** is adjustable, then raise or lower this so that the lower spine cushioning fits with your corresponding lower spine curvature.
- Finally adjust any 'desirable' chair components: raise or lower arm rests to meet your elbows; adjust a headrest to support the upper neck; adjust the seat depth to accommodate your thigh length.

If you make these adjustments and sit fully back in the chair with the pelvis in contact with the back rest, then avoid forward leaning and/or slumping, you will minimise the strain on the joints of the spine in sitting.

Finally, to answer your questions...

**Yes**, it is ok to lean forward.

**Yes**, it is ok to cross your legs.

**Yes**, it is ok to adjust the chair multiple times per day.

# Summary

