

## SOLUTIONS FOR OVERCOMING POOR SITTING POSTURE

By Dr. John A. Papa, DC, FCCP(C)

An ideal posture allows an individual to maintain an efficient, strong, and balanced position while interacting and adapting to their physical environment. Good postural habits can help decrease abnormal and excessive physical strain on the body, thereby minimizing the chance of injury.

Unfortunately, modern technology has significantly influenced our daily postural habits, which has resulted in having people **sit more often and for longer periods of time**. Individuals exposed to these sitting positions may adopt a poor posture that includes losing the natural hollow of the low back, rounding or slouching of the upper back and shoulders, and a forward head poking position.



Less than ideal posture puts **cumulative compression, stretch, and shear forces** on the body. The cumulative effects of sitting are often offset by the body's ability to **compensate**. However, even in the absence of pain, these **compensatory** changes may begin a vicious cycle of unbalanced motion, muscle and joint stress, and secondary areas of discomfort. As a result, the physical consequences of chronic poor posture can lead to symptoms such as **muscle and joint stiffness, nerve pain, headaches, shoulder pain, neck pain, upper and lower back pain**.

Listed below are some potential solutions that can minimize the chance of postural injury, specifically as it pertains to the sitting position:

1. **Pay attention to how you sit** by making sure weight is evenly distributed in your seat, your shoulders are not rounding forward, and you are not slouching. Your head should be resting on your torso and not poking forward.
2. **Take a break from sitting** with 10 to 30 second stretch or posture breaks every 20 to 40 minutes. Some activities such as computer work, talking on the phone, and business meetings can also be done while standing.
3. The use of a **properly designed workstation** (i.e. adjustable chair and desk), along with **ergonomic tools and assistive devices** (i.e. speakerphones, foot stools, lumbar supports) can help maintain mechanically advantageous positions while working in a seated position.
4. **Avoid unnatural positions** such as looking down, awkward twisting, or slouching for long periods of time as this can cause unnecessary strain. A simple solution may be to bring your smartphone, tablet, or book closer to eye level, or adjusting your seat position to help you maintain a more natural/neutral position.
5. **Engaging in regular physical activity and exercise can keep your body strong** and help overcome the effects of cumulative strain associated with poor posture. Exercise activities can include general cardiovascular conditioning, along with postural, stretching and strengthening exercises for the neck, shoulders, upper and lower back regions.



Prolonged sitting and poor posture can undeniably cause real physical change and breakdown in the body. If you have ongoing pain as a result of postural strain, you should contact a licensed health professional who deals in the diagnosis and treatment of these conditions. For more information visit [www.nhwc.ca](http://www.nhwc.ca).

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