



Are you sitting comfortably?

Information for schools, parents and professionals

Are you sitting comfortably?

Children who are not sitting comfortably will fidget, slump, twist, tire easily, swing feet and sit on their legs. They will have poor concentration/attention span, if they have to use energy to stabilise themselves instead of using that energy to focus on the task at hand. It will also impact on the postural control and stability which will affect the efficiency of fine motor and handwriting activity.

Posture is our ability to maintain and regain our balance. A strong, dynamic (ready-to-move) sitting posture is necessary to free up a child's arms, hands and fingers to perform activities such as writing in the classroom. Good posture begins by simply being aware of how you sit. It is important to talk to children about posture.

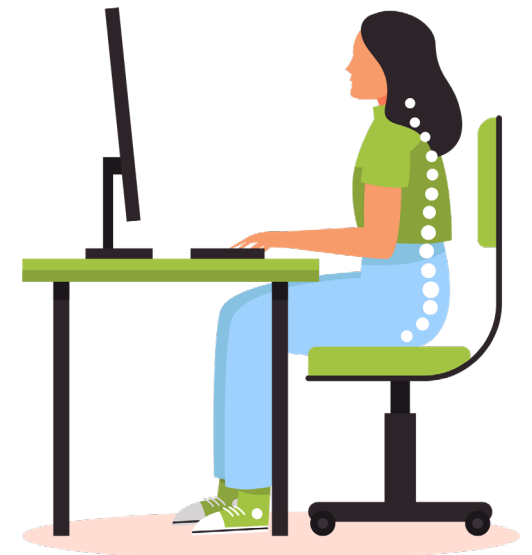
Practical tips for posture, seating and ergonomics

Start with Stability

Apply the 90-90-90 rule. This means that when seated at a desk, we want to ensure:

- Feet flat on the floor
90 degrees at ankles
- Knees bent at 90 degrees
- Hips at 90 degrees

The top of the desk should be approximately 2 inches above the elbows when arms are bent, this will ensure the child's neck, shoulders, hands and fingers are relaxed.



If the table is too high: a child will prop elbows up and out, hike up shoulders and be inclined to lean his body against the desk.

If the table is too low: the child will slouch and lean his/her body on the table.

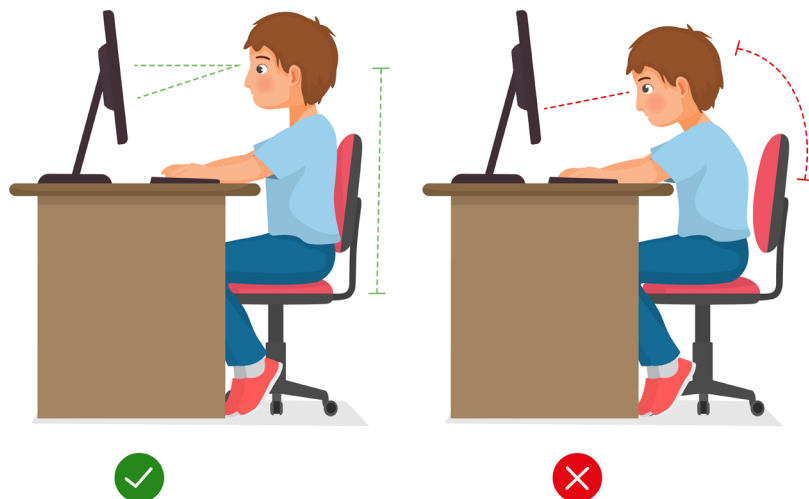
Good posture

The chair should provide support for the child's back maintaining a natural "S" curvature of the spine with shoulders and neck relaxed and a good base for the buttock and thigh muscles.

- Good posture uses the correct muscles
- Increases alertness/limits fatigue
- Prevents back pain
- Reduced shoulder, arm and hand strain.

Movement breaks

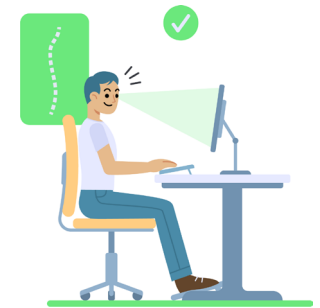
Regular movement breaks – every 20 to 25 minutes helps with concentration.



Postural/seating accessories

Use seating accessories where necessary to make adjustments and to correct posture.

- Sitting wedge
- Wobble cushion wedge
- Foot rests/low stools.
- Lumbar posture cushion
- Writing slope.



What does core strength have to do with attention?

When children don't have good core muscle endurance, they struggle with sitting in one position for extended periods of time. They move around a lot. They shift, they lean, they slump, and they fidget.

Children with weak core muscles also have to pay so much attention to maintaining functional upright posture that they don't have a whole lot of focus left for academic tasks and other tasks of everyday living. Because they are working so hard on maintaining good posture, children often become frustrated and agitated when presented with seemingly simple tasks and activities. They simply don't have the stamina to do both.

Core strengthening through games and everyday play

While the core strengthening exercises such as bridging, plank, wheelbarrow walking, lying on tummy and stretching are perfect for targeting core strengthening specifically and can be incorporated into PE, sometimes good old fashioned play activities can have just as much benefit, such as swimming and obstacle courses.

Computer ergonomics

Whether it's for homework, gaming, or just chatting with their friends, children are spending more and more time at a computer, so it's important to make sure they're sitting correctly. If a child spends countless hours sitting at a computer the wrong way, he or she can develop some bad habits that can lead to orthopaedic issues.

Sit up straight

Educate children to sit with their rear end in the back of the chair with lumbar (lower back) supported by the chair, and feet on the floor. This will allow the child to have upright posture more easily.



Feet

Firmly on the ground or on a footrest.

Arm placement

Forearms should be comfortably resting on desk 90 degree elbow bend, minimal bend at wrists.

Upper back

The shoulder blades and upper back should be straight and relaxed, should be resting against the back of the chair.

Eyes

Eyes should be parallel with the top of the computer screen to decrease the chance for straining the neck.

Rest the eyes. - A general rule of thumb is 20-20: stare at a blank wall 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This will help decrease eye strain and headaches.

Break time

Encourage mandatory breaks from the computer every 20-30 minutes if allowed. Setting a timer to sound every 20-30 minutes can help remind them to stop for a few minutes.

Stretch

Encourage children to stretch and move while working on the computer — with head rolls, shoulder rolls, or marching in place while seated, to decrease pressure on different parts of the body.

If your child starts to exhibit signs of fatigue, headaches, or cramping in the neck, back, shoulders or forearms, intervene early to prevent these issues from developing.



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