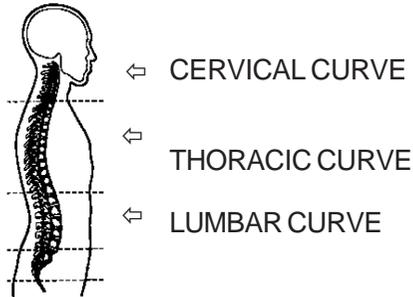


## INTRODUCTION

There are some simple things that you can try that will help you look after your back and may reduce any pain or discomfort you might have.

## POSTURE/POSITIONS

The spine is made up of three important curves:

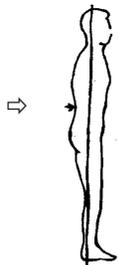


It is important to restore these curves regularly. Prolonged loss of these curves, for example during bending activities or slouching, will over stretch and weaken the supporting structures of the spine and may produce or worsen your back pain.

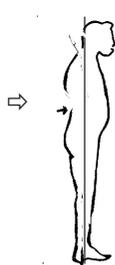
## STANDING

You should always try to stand tall with your chest lifted up and out, your stomach muscles pulled in and your bottom in. It will be difficult to maintain this position to start with, but with practice it will become possible to always stand like this and it will help with your back problem.

### Correct Standing Posture



### Incorrect Standing Posture



- Avoid prolonged stooping and slouching. With activities that require you to remain in one position for long periods, try and change your position regularly and stretch in the opposite direction
- With activities that involve bending over while standing, eg, Hoovering, ironing or working on the car, try to adjust your position so that you bend your knees more and your back less, or kneel down, or try and put your work on a surface that is a better height for you

## SITTING

### Poor Sitting Position:



### Correct Sitting Position:



- As with standing, you should try to sit upright with your chest lifted up and out as shown in the diagram above
- Sit right back in the chair ensuring that your feet can reach the floor or use a foot rest
- Maintain the curve in your lower back by using a supporting roll, eg, a rolled up towel of about 3 to 4 inches diameter or roll of kitchen towel paper
- Ideally, sit on a firm, upright chair
- Avoid sitting on a low, soft chair or couch, as this will encourage you to lose the curve in your lower back and is more difficult to get up from.
- Do not cross your legs.

## Activities in sitting

When involved in an activity that involves prolonged sitting, eg, sewing, writing, reading, working on a computer or driving:

- Adopt a good sitting posture as described above
- Change your position regularly, eg, by standing up and walking as tall as you can for a few minutes at least every hour

## DRIVING

Adopt a good position as indicated

### Correct



### Incorrect



- You may need a lumbar roll or wedge to help you to achieve the best position
- You may need to alter the angle of the back rest, the distance from the steering wheel and, if possible, the height of the seat.

## SLEEPING

- A good supportive mattress on a firm base is recommended, but you may have to experiment to find what is most comfortable for you.
- Some people find a board under their mattress helpful and some find putting their mattress on the floor helps in the acute phase of the back problem.
- Ideally the spine should be supported so that it remains in a neutral position as illustrated.



- It is worth bearing in mind that a mattress can be too hard or too soft. You need to find one that suits you.

## LIFTING AND CARRYING

### Remember to obey the following principles:

- Ensure the load is suitable for the state of your back. If in doubt, get help
- Make sure your feet are well apart and as close to the load as you can get
- Bend your knees to go down to the load
- Keep your back as straight as possible
- Hold the load securely and as close to you as possible
- Lift smoothly and keep the load as close to your body as possible
- Move your feet to transfer the load and avoid twisting your spine
- When putting the load down, reverse the process
- **When in acute pain it is probably better avoid lifting altogether**

## ERGONOMICS

It is important to consider the nature of your working environment and its effect on your pain and discomfort.

If your working day involves prolonged sitting or standing in the same position the following may give some relief:

- A specific programme of exercises given by your physiotherapist which can be performed at regular intervals during the day.
- During your leisure time try and adopt different positions and movements to those performed at work.
- Take short work breaks in order to move around, stretch and change your spinal curves.

If you would like more information about ergonomics you may find the following website helpful: [www.ergonomics.co.uk](http://www.ergonomics.co.uk)

## ACTIVITIES

Current research is showing that we should remain as active as possible even when we have back pain. Early return to work and other normal activities will help with recovery. Maintaining good general fitness levels also helps to reduce back pain.

If you would like more information on managing your back pain, you might find the following websites helpful:

[www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)

[www.painsupport.co.uk](http://www.painsupport.co.uk)

# BACK CARE ADVICE FOR PATIENTS

**If you have any questions concerning this advice sheet, please contact:**

### A SENIOR PHYSIOTHERAPIST at:

Community ..... 01935 384358

General Practice .....

Yeovil District Hospital ..... 01935 384358

*Physiotherapy Department*