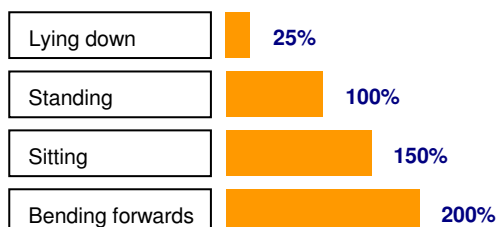


# Spinal damage at Omph

## Reduce back pain and tension by changing the way you sit at your desk

'Spinal damage at Omph' sounds a bit dramatic but it's possible if you sit at your desk for eight hours a day without thinking about your posture. The fact is, sitting puts more pressure on the lower back than standing. Take a look at the table below which shows disc pressure in the lumbar spine in various positions:



### Disc pressure in the lumbar spine<sup>1</sup>

Back pain affects around 17.3 million people in the UK<sup>2</sup>. It's the second most common reason for days off work (the No.1 spot goes to the common cold). Just why do our backs cause us so much trouble? Most back problems are muscular in origin: an inactive lifestyle + long periods spent hunched over an office desk = weak or tense muscles. But the problem doesn't end there. Poor posture can also compress blood vessels and nerves. Like kinks in a hose pipe, this disrupts the flow of oxygen, nutrients and electrical impulses throughout the body. The upshot: headaches, tension, tiredness, and back, neck and shoulder problems. The good news is that some simple adjustments to your posture is all it takes to untangle your hose pipe and enable your body and mind to work at maximum efficiency (see *One Minute to Perfect Posture*).

### 6 reasons to improve your posture

- 1. You'll have more energy**  
Sitting upright means you can breathe freely and deeply. Result: more energy.
- 2. You'll feel less tense**  
Better posture means your muscles won't have to work so hard to keep your body in alignment.
- 3. Your digestion will improve**  
Slouching compresses the abdomen and restricts digestion.
- 4. You'll think more clearly**  
Slouching encourages the head to jut forward which impedes blood flow to the brain.
- 5. You'll have fewer headaches**  
Less tension in the neck and upper back muscles means fewer headaches.
- 6. You'll look more confident**  
Posture reflects mental state; good posture makes you look and feel more confident.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Your Guide to Back Pain* by Dr John Tanner

<sup>2</sup> The National Back Pain Association

## ONE MINUTE TO PERFECT POSTURE

### 1. Focus on your feet

Place your feet flat on the floor. Your knees should be hip-width apart and your hips should be level with or slightly higher than your knees.

*TIP: Never let your feet dangle. This puts pressure on the backs of your thighs and cuts off circulation to the lower leg. Either adjust your chair or use a footrest.*

### 2. Find your sitting bones

Make sure you are sitting directly on your sitting bones.

*TIP: To find your sitting bones place your palms beneath your buttocks. Rock backwards and forwards – you're feeling for two bony bits that stick down. When you've found them, slide your hands out, keeping the sitting bones in contact with the chair.*

### 3. Check your pelvis

The position of your pelvis affects the way you sit. Check your pelvis is in 'neutral'.

*TIP: Rock backwards off your sitting bones (can you feel the small of your back slump?). Now rock forwards (can you feel how this pulls the lower back forward and causes your upper body to sway backwards?). The ideal position is somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.*

### 4. Lengthen your spine

Adjust your back rest so you are sitting upright with your lumbar curve supported (if you need more support place a small cushion or rolled-up towel in the small of your back).

*TIP: To help you lengthen your spine, imagine there is a string attached to the crown of your head that is pulling you towards the ceiling.*

### 5. Align your arms and hands

Keep your elbows bent at a 90 degree angle close to your body. Ensure your forearms are parallel to your desk and your hands are in neutral (i.e. the knuckle of your middle finger and the centre of your wrist should be in a straight line). Avoid flexing your wrists upwards as you type (this can compress nerves in your wrist) and try not to hold the mouse in a death grip!

*TIP: To find neutral, sit with your arms hanging by your sides, fingers relaxed. Now lift your hands up to the keyboard, keeping the same wrist and hand position.*

### 6. Check your head position

Check that your head isn't jutting forward.

*TIP: Do a neck glide: without tilting your head, pull your head back over the middle of your shoulders (imagine pressing the back of your neck against an imaginary wall behind you).*