

Wellness Articles

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If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these articles, please email: Rebecca.johnson2@albertahealthservices.ca. You will receive a monthly email containing articles for the upcoming four weeks.

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Sit your way to a healthy back

If you spend a lot of time in a chair for work, you may want to think about your posture. Slouching while sitting can cause short- and long-term back problems, but you don't need expensive gizmos and gadgets to fix the problem.

If you're sitting for a long time during the day, you may be noticing tightness and back pain. Slouching puts stress on your lower back. Slumping or slouching on its own may not cause low back pain, but after the back has been strained or injured, bad posture can make pain worse. When you sit, keep your shoulders back, keeping a slight curve in your lower back.

There are many ways to improve your sitting posture, not just while working. Good posture is helpful when driving, at the movie theatre, on the couch, or even out at a restaurant. Here are some tips and exercises to help you sit your way to a healthy back:

- Place a lumbar/foam roller in the curve of your back while you sit. Don't have a roller? A small pillow or rolled up towel works great.
- Ensure your chair is low enough to allow you to place both feet flat on the floor, with your knees slightly lower than your hips. If you are unable to set your chair lower, use a small footstool or even a book as a footstool to raise your knees.
- When driving, ensure your knees are nearly level with your hips by adjusting your seat closer or further from the wheel. Sit straight and upright with both hands on the wheel with your arms in a slightly flexed but comfortable position. Remember that lumbar roller? It works great here too. If your seat is angled back away from the steering wheel, create a horizontal surface using a travel cushion or triangle foam wedge.



- Set breaks for yourself to get up and move around a bit if you've been sitting for a long time. Do some quick stretches to loosen up your back before sitting again.

As always, talk to your doctor or physiotherapist if your back pain is more persistent or doesn't improve with posture. A healthy back is a happy back--and a happy you!