

Critical Early Intervention:

Improving Poor Sitting Posture to Prevent Neck Pain and Headaches



FACT

Poor posture causes strain on upper back muscles, shoulders and neck.

“Tech Neck” has been reported in up to 48% of professional workers, based on worldwide research.

73% of university students and 64.7% of people who work from home have reported persistent neck or back pain.

Intervening with proper sitting posture is critical and simple.

In a post-pandemic world where working from home has become normalised and our community's connection to technology has increased, issues of posture-related discomfort are growingly prevalent.

How can you better support your patients?

It all starts with posture. And, as with any type of treatment, early intervention is the key. At our clinic, we aim to provide not only best practice hands-on treatment but also exercises for patients to empower themselves, intervene early and take better care of themselves in the comfort of their own homes - when feasible. Helping them to understand the impact of poor sitting posture is the first step:



Neck Pain: Slouching or hunching forward places extra strain on the neck muscles and cervical spine, leading to neck pain.



Headaches: Tension in the neck and upper back muscles from poor posture can lead to tension headaches and migraines.



Spinal Alignment: Poor sitting posture, such as slouching or leaning forward, disrupts the spine's natural alignment. This misalignment increases pressure on the intervertebral discs and the vertebrae.



Back Pain: Poor posture can misalign the spine and place undue pressure on the lower back, causing discomfort and pain.



Disc Degeneration: Continuous pressure on the discs will make them more vulnerable to injury and can lead to degenerative disc disease. As this occurs, the discs lose their ability to absorb shock, resulting in pain and reduced mobility.



Early intervention is crucial

If your patient is experiencing discomfort that may be related to their sitting posture, do not delay. Physiotherapy intervention is the best course of action to help them restore their potential and transition them from pain to performance with the support they need. In some cases, early intervention tactics can be introduced in the safety of your patient's home or work environment.



Proper sitting posture in the eyes of a physiotherapist

Correct Chair Setup:

Use a chair with proper lumbar support and adjustable height. Your patient's feet should be flat on the floor, and their knees at a right angle.

Monitor Position:

Your patient should ensure their computer screen is at eye level to avoid leaning forward and provide the best ergonomic support to their body.

Regular Breaks:

If your patient works in front of a computer, encourage them to take short breaks every 30 minutes to stand, stretch, and move around.

Core Strengthening:

Encourage your patient to engage in exercises that strengthen your core muscles, which support your spine and help maintain good posture. Clinical Pilates demonstrates overwhelming success in this endeavour.

Mindful Sitting:

Your patient should be mindful of their posture throughout the day. Remind them to make a habit of sitting up straight with their shoulders relaxed and their back against the chair.

Did you find this information useful?

Visit the **Benchmark Physiotherapy General Practitioners Hub** for more valuable resources to empower your patient for better outcomes with physiotherapy.

Contact us to find out more about how we can help your patients reach their potential.

1300 381 207

References

- Hansraj, K. K. (2014). Assessment of stresses in the cervical spine caused by posture and position of the head. *Surgical Technology International*, 25, 277-279.
- Cagnie, B., Danneels, L., Van Tiggelen, D., & De Loose, V. (2007). Individual and work related risk factors for neck pain among office workers: a cross sectional study. *European Spine Journal*, 16(5), 679-686.
- Gustafsson, E., Thomée, S., Grimby-Ekman, A., Hagberg, M. (2012). Texting on mobile phones and musculoskeletal disorders in young adults: A five-year cohort study. *Applied Ergonomics*, 43(3), 590-594.
- Straker, L., Coleman, J., Skoss, R., Maslen, B., Burgess-Limerick, R., Pollock, C., & Murray, K. (2008). A comparison of posture and muscle activity during tablet computer, desktop computer and paper use by young children. *Ergonomics*, 51(4), 540-555.