

Good posture and spine care in children

ORTHOPAEDIC FACT SHEET 8

Developing and maintaining good posture in childhood and adolescence is important for good health. Posture in children can be influenced by a number of factors including:

- their activity levels
- their age and gender
- their self-confidence
- their height and weight
- seating equipment at school and home
- the weight and size of their schoolbag.

Correct posture in sitting and standing is where the ear, shoulder and hip fall in a straight line when looking from a side-on view (Figure 1).

Tips for good posture

- Ensure that chairs and desks are the appropriate size and height for your child. The chair should allow their feet to touch the floor when their bottom is positioned at the back of the chair. The backrest should provide support from the lower back to the shoulder blades (Figure 2).
- Ensure school backpacks are worn over both shoulders and that heavier items are packed close to the child's back.
- Limit television and computer time. Encourage regular walking, moving and stretching breaks when sitting for prolonged periods at the computer, doing homework, watching TV or playing video games. Posture reversal (Figure 3) reduces fatigue and potential strain and pain in muscles, ligaments and joints. Long periods of sitting should be combined with different positions such as standing or lying on their tummy to stretch out their back (Figure 4).
- Encourage your child to be physically active and involved in regular exercise.

Consult your doctor if your child:

- complains of persistent back or neck pain that interferes with sleep or daily activities
- slouches over and is unable to stand up straight
- appears to have uneven posture with a curve in the spine when standing.

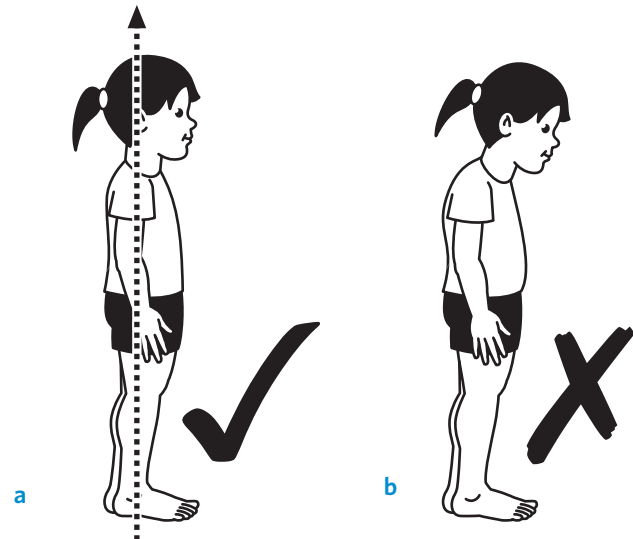


Figure 1. Good posture with the ear, shoulder and hip all in line (a)

Poor posture (b)



Figure 2. Correct position when sitting

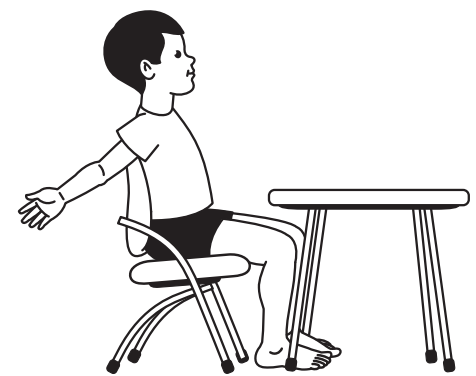


Figure 3. Posture reversal



Figure 4. Lie on the tummy and stretch the back