



# The Perfect Posture Doesn't Exist

You may have heard that you must sit up tall and keep your back straight when you sit. We often see companies invest heavily in ergonomic set-ups for their employees which promote keeping the spine in a "neutral" position in order to reduce the prevalence of back pain, or attempt to help those already suffering with back pain. There is no strong evidence to support this notion of a "good posture". The truth is – **we don't know what good posture looks like.**

Research does not show a relationship between posture and pain, so we shouldn't be blaming posture for your pain. There are likely many other contributing factors that are unique to you and should be discussed with your Exercise Physiologist.

## The Role of Habits and Expectations

A posture can become a protective mechanism and reflect your beliefs about your back – if you feel vulnerable and as though your back needs to be protected, you may be more inclined to "sit up straight". Understanding why you feel the need to do so can be important.

We also know that expectations have a huge influence on various bodily functions, but particularly with pain. If your beliefs have been shaped to think that sitting with a bent back is going to cause pain, this can actually cause an increase in pain.

**Your best posture is your next posture.**

### References:

Laird, R et al. (2014). Comparing lumbo-pelvic kinematics in people with and without back pain: a systematic review and meta-analysis. BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders.

Slater, D et al (2019). Sit up straight: Time to re-evaluate. Journal of Sport Physical Therapy.

## What Should You Do?

The idea of "sitting up straight" has become a common belief across society, and while doing this can feel better for a period of time, you do not need to sit like this to protect your back. In fact, if you sit like this for too long it may make you feel sore, as sitting up straight requires increased muscle activity of the back muscles and may cause higher levels of discomfort and fatigue.

Sitting can be uncomfortable and painful if you have low back pain. **Sitting for long periods of time should still be avoided.** But, think about why sitting is painful. It is much more likely due to a lack of movement, rather than the position of your spine.

What feels good for you will likely be different to what feels good for your colleague.

There are natural variations in spinal curvatures, and no correlation between these variations and pain. Sit in a way that feels comfortable for you, and when that feels uncomfortable, change it –

**just keep moving!**

