

## Posture Plus Top Ten Tips

### Low Back Pain

1. **Sitting:** Always use the back-rest of your chair and sit with your feet flat on the floor or on a footrest, elbows at 90 degrees. *(See the Posture Plus “A Guide to Work with Computers” handout)*
2. **Avoid sustained postures – even good ones!** The discs in your spine need movement for nutrition: *be dynamic!* Take a micro-break – 5 minutes every hour: get up from your desk, change position, do a stretch, have a drink of water or arrange a meeting outside of the office.
3. **Lifting:** Always bend at your knees and hips, keep your spine straight, pull your tummy in and when you lift or carry objects, keep them close to your body. *Never bend, lift and twist at the same time. (See the Posture Plus “This is How We Lift” handout)*
4. **Sleeping:** How old is your mattress?? Your mattress should be supportive rather than rock hard or too soft. The most restful positions are lying on your back with several large pillows under your knees, lying on your side with a small pillow under your waist and a large pillow between your knees. *Avoid sleeping on your stomach.* Another rest position for the lower back is lying on the floor with your lower legs resting on a chair for 20 minutes.
5. **Keep moving!** Don't stop your current exercise unless it makes you feel worse or if you have been advised to stop by your healthcare provider. Research has shown that regular exercise helps to alleviate low back pain as well as provide many other health benefits.
6. **Avoid carrying loads always on one side:** children, luggage, heavy handbags, groceries etc. *Redistribute the load evenly, carry on alternate sides!*
7. **Use your “core” muscles.** Gently pull in your tummy (your lower tummy should flatten and your waist should go in) whenever you remember. Your clothing or belt should feel slightly loose. This action will help to stimulate the core stabilising muscles of your spine and help to protect your spine regardless of what you are doing. The more often you do this simple exercise the easier it will become and before you know it, the action will become automatic.
8. **Keep your spine long.** Always think about gently lengthening your spine in all postures, whether you are sitting, standing, walking, picking up something etc. *Don't let gravity win!*
9. **Wear sensible shoes.** If your back is feeling very stiff and sore – wear slip on shoes rather than the lace-up variety. And ladies - keep heels low for everyday wear, every extra centimetre on your heel shifts your centre of gravity forward. This leads to increased activity of your back muscles in order to hold your spine upright.
10. **What positions or movements makes things better or worse?** Try to ascertain if there are particular postures or movements that reduce or increase your pain. Avoid postures or movements that you know irritate your back and please remember to tell your therapist – this will help them with your treatment plan.

*Warning: if you feel any increase in pain or discomfort when trying the Top Ten Tips – stop immediately and contact your Physiotherapist.*