Avoid the Slump

Sitting Up the Right Way

Every day people sit on average [9-10 hours](https://annals.org/aim/article-abstract/2653704/patterns-sedentary-behavior-mortality-u-s-middle-aged-older-adults) per day. We sit in the car, on the couch, at our desks, and in bed. That’s a lot of sitting. Bad posture while sitting leads to lots of aches and pains. In one year back pain accounts for [264 million lost work days](https://www.boneandjointburden.org/docs/BMUS%20Impact%20of%20MSK%20on%20Americans%20booklet_4th%20Edition%20%282018%29.pdf) worldwide. Avoid the pitfalls of bad posture and reduce your back pain.

When you sit with correct posture, engage your core and rest on your “sit bones.” If you’ve never heard of sit bones, then you’re not alone. Your sit bones are your [ischial tuberosity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ischial_tuberosity) bones and are part of your lower pelvis that is covered by the gluteus maximus (your butt) when standing. These bones are commonly referred to as the sit bones because when we sit our butt muscle shifts upward and we rest on these bones. You may have noticed your sit bones when sitting on a particularly hard surface or had a yoga instructor tell you to sit on them. Resting on these bones and engaging your core muscles is the cornerstone of good posture.

If you feel pain or tightness in your upper back and shoulders, then you’re not sitting correctly. The longer we sit, our heads tend to creep forward, or we slump down like a wilted flower. Here’s how to avoid the lousy posture pitfalls for different situations.

### Driving a Car

Don’t put only one foot forward while driving. Holding one leg in the forward position on the gas pedal creates a strain on one side of the body. Instead, slide your other foot forward as well and leave it near the pedals. Also, make sure you aren’t sitting on your wallet or phone. This raises one side of the body and creates strain solely on one side.

Watching TV

Don’t sit on a couch that’s too soft or has no lumbar support. If your low back is tight after sitting on your couch for 20-30 minutes, then your sofa is too soft. Instead, recline to watch TV or sit and tuck a pillow behind your low back for support. Choose as firm a couch as possible when buying new living room furniture.

Reading a book

The pitfall to avoid when reading is looking down for an extended period. This leads to hunching over and overextending your neck. Instead, sit in a supportive chair and hold the book up to eye level. Or use a [book stand](https://www.amazon.com/Covers-Paperbacks-CookBooks-TextBooks-Magazines/dp/B000ABHIXG/ref%3Dsr_1_28?keywords=book+stand&qid=1555515450&s=gateway&sr=8-28) to hold the book while you sit in a supported position.

At a Desk

Sitting at your desk is an invitation to hunch over while focusing on your laptop or your writing. Regular breaks or using a standing desk are necessary and beneficial. While you are sitting at a desk make sure the top of your computer monitor is at eye level. Engage your core and have a seat that allows you to sit on your sit bones comfortably.