

Understanding Your Posture and How It Affects Pain

What Posture Really Means for Your Recovery

1 What Is Posture, Really?

Posture is not about standing up straight or holding a particular position perfectly. It is about how your body distributes load — force and stress — through your muscles, joints, tendons, and discs during movement and rest. Every position you hold places demand on specific tissues. Over a short time that is fine; the tissues adapt. The problem arises when one position is held for too long without change, causing load to concentrate in the same spot repeatedly.

There is no perfect posture — there is only posture that you hold for too long.

2 How Posture Can Contribute to Pain

Sustained positions increase load on specific tissues. Tendons, joints, and discs are all sensitive to the duration and repetition of load — not just its magnitude. The table below shows common posture habits, the tissues they tend to load, and the symptoms that often follow.

Posture Habit	Tissues Affected	Common Symptoms
Prolonged sitting	Hip flexors, lumbar discs, gluteal tendons	Low back stiffness, hip ache, disc-related leg pain
Head forward position	Cervical extensors, upper trapezius, suboccipitals	Neck pain, shoulder tension, headaches
Flat feet (excess pronation)	Plantar fascia, tibialis posterior, medial knee	Foot and ankle pain, medial knee load, shin soreness
Standing on one leg habitually	Hip abductors, IT band, lateral hip capsule	Lateral knee or hip pain, gluteal tendon irritation

3 Posture and the Foot

The foot is your body's foundation. Its posture — whether it rolls inward (pronation) or outward (supination) — influences how load travels up through the ankle, knee, hip, and lower back. This chain of influence is called the kinetic chain. Orthotics are shoe inserts designed to modify foot posture and redistribute load, reducing stress at the foot and at higher points in the chain.

Foot Posture Variation	Common Associated Symptoms	What Helps
Excess pronation (flat foot)	Plantar heel pain, medial shin pain, patellofemoral knee pain	Supportive footwear, medial arch orthotics, foot strengthening exercises
Excess supination (high arch)	Lateral ankle sprains, IT band syndrome, peroneal tendon pain	Cushioned footwear, lateral wedge orthotics, hip and calf strengthening
Neutral foot with rigid arch	Metatarsal stress, limited shock absorption, calf tightness	Cushioned insoles, calf stretching, graded loading programme

4 What You Can Do

Movement variety is more important than achieving any single 'correct' posture. The goal is to avoid loading the same tissues in the same way for extended periods. Regular position changes — even small ones — allow tissues to recover and reduce the risk of pain building up. As the saying goes: the best posture is the next one.

Simple Posture Strategy	How Often	Why It Helps
Change sitting position or stand briefly	Every 20–30 minutes	Reduces sustained load on lumbar discs and hip flexors
Set a movement reminder (phone/watch alarm)	Every 30 minutes during desk work	Breaks the habit of staying in one position without noticing
Alternate between sitting and standing at a desk	Switch every 30–60 minutes	Distributes load between standing and seated tissues more evenly
Chin tucks and neck rolls	2–3 sets throughout the day	Relieves sustained cervical extensor load from forward head posture
Walk for 5 minutes after prolonged sitting	After every 60–90 minutes of sitting	Restores blood flow and reduces disc pressure from static posture

5 Key Takeaways

KEY TAKEAWAY 1

No posture is permanently bad — sustained posture is the problem. Your body is designed to move through many positions throughout the day. Any posture — even an 'ideal' one — becomes a problem when held without variety. Small, frequent changes in position are far more effective than trying to maintain a rigid 'correct' posture all day long.

KEY TAKEAWAY 2

Your foot posture affects your whole body. The way your foot contacts the ground influences load at the ankle, knee, hip, and lower back. If you are experiencing pain at multiple points in the leg or back, ask your clinician whether your foot posture is contributing — and whether orthotics or footwear changes might help redistribute that load.

KEY TAKEAWAY 3

Movement variety is the most powerful posture tool you have. You do not need expensive equipment or a perfect workstation. Building the habit of changing position regularly — sitting, standing, walking, stretching — is the single most effective step you can take. Your clinician can help you identify which positions are most loading your painful tissues and tailor a movement strategy to your specific situation.