

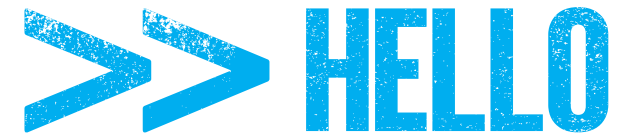


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**HEALTHY
BACK.
BETTER
POSTURE.**

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AND WELCOME TO OUR GUIDE ON HAVING A HEALTHY BACK & PERFECTING YOUR POSTURE.

The chances are, if you're reading this, you're trying to deal with back pain (or you have done in the past) and you want to do something about it to prevent it.

Firstly, don't worry, you're not alone. 80% of people will suffer from back pain at some point in their lives. Back pain is the most common reason for people missing work and the single largest cause of disability in the UK.

And it's getting worse. Thanks to the amount of time many of us spend sat at a desk, the rise in sedentary lifestyles, poor nutrition (which leads to rising obesity levels), and our widespread use of electronic devices, we're on the cusp of a back pain and poor posture epidemic.

The threat of this is very real. Not only does it cost the economy £millions in sick days, it puts extra strain on our health services and, most importantly, it can have a huge impact on our lives. When we're constantly in pain it can have all kinds of knock-on effects and is downright miserable to live with.

The good news is, there's plenty of simple things you can do to improve your posture and have a healthier back. From simply moving to carrying out easy, straightforward exercises – you can make huge improvements to your health and, as a result, start feeling good again.

Life constantly throws challenges at us. Whether that's our health, our lifestyle, our work habits, injury or stress, there's always going to be obstacles to overcome. At Chiro London, we've been helping people lead healthier lives for more than 25 years. Our aim is to help you overcome these obstacles by putting your health first, restoring it and helping you function the way you were meant to.

We've gathered a team of experts who lead by example eating, moving and thinking in a way that promotes optimal health. We hope this guide helps you do the same and we're here to help if you have questions, need advice, or would like a consultation with us.

Happy reading and we're hope you're as excited as we are to start your journey towards having a healthier back and better posture.

CRAIG MCLEAN

Chiropractor & Co-Founder of Chiro.London

WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN?

BEFORE WE SHOW YOU THE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN DEAL WITH BACK PAIN, IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN.

There are many factors that can contribute to spinal pain, however in the absence of trauma or injury, sedentary lifestyle and poor posture are certainly big players in the game. With desk-based jobs increasing in our technology-focused times, people are spending up to 10 hours per day sitting and staring at a screen. As humans, our bodies are designed to be moving throughout the day.

Our body responds and adapts on a daily basis to stresses we're exposed to, most of this happens without us even noticing it. But if something does not work the way it should we suddenly get a wakeup call.

The severity of back pain can vary hugely from person to person, with some experiencing a dull ache in their back, while for others it can lead to excruciating pain and lack of mobility. The way your body acts can be random, minor problems can sometimes present as severe disabling pain, while other times more serious problems can present as mild discomfort that you can try and ignore.

Your back is made up of such an intricate structure of muscles, bones, joints and nerves, it's no surprise that they don't always work together as they should.

Your back is made up of such an intricate structure of muscles, bones, joints and nerves, it's no surprise that they don't always work together as they should. Rather than a result of serious injuries or strains, most back pain appears as a result of pinched or irritated nerves. As noted above, these can come from actions such as sitting for long periods of time, hunching or slouching, bending awkwardly for long periods of time or lifting and carrying incorrectly.

Our spines are incredible. They house our central nervous system so if anything happens to them that prevents them functioning in the way they are meant to, then we can feel the impact in all kinds of different ways. The nerves that exit at each single spinal level control everything from our limbs and movement to our digestion and immune function.



THE ANATOMY OF THE SPINE

WHAT CAUSES POOR POSTURE?

AS A NATION WE NOW SPEND MORE TIME STARING AT A COMPUTER SCREEN THAN WE DO ASLEEP!

Whether it's for work, education or socialising, computers, tablets and phones are now a huge part of our lives. Unfortunately the position we take when looking at them is very often an unnatural one that puts unnecessary strain on our spines. Good posture is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve due to seemingly uncontrollable factors of our lifestyles.

Stress, sitting for long periods of time, using electronic devices, carrying heavy bags and lack of exercise all contribute to poor posture.

Forward head posture is a condition in which a person's head is held in front instead of above their shoulders.

Forward head posture creates excessive strain on the muscles in your neck and back. It has been estimated that for every inch your head sits in front of your shoulders, the weight of it increases by 10 pounds. To cope with the extra weight, your muscles are in constant contraction. This adds pressure to the base of your skull and can lead to headaches, tingling and numbness in the arms, and a burning pain between the shoulder blades.

The more serious issue with forward head posture is that it restricts the movement of your ribs and therefore your ability to breath deeply. Put simply, not having your head on straight can affect your health.

TO SUMMARISE:

- Incorrect head position leads to improper spinal function.
- The forward posture can add up to thirty pounds of abnormal leverage on the cervical spine.
- Forward head posture results in loss of vital capacity – lung capacity is depleted as much as 30%. Loss of lung capacity can lead to heart and blood vascular problems. (Try this – jut your chin out and flex your head down and try to breathe – you can barely do it. Now tuck your chin in and extend your head backwards slightly – now you can really fill your lungs properly!).
- Forward head posture causes an increase in discomfort and pain of the neck sometimes resulting in headaches.
- Forward head posture can lead to the upper back becoming hunched which can lead to the hump we sometimes see in old age.

>> HOW YOU CAN HAVE A HEALTHIER BACK & BETTER POSTURE

BACK PAIN CAN BE DEBILITATING AND EMOTIONALLY DISTRESSING, BUT WE CAN HELP YOU ADDRESS THIS NATURALLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

Managing stress on the spine is very important, this includes **physical stress** (falls, overtraining, no movement), **emotional stress** (causing that only too well know shoulder tension) and **chemical stress** (bad diet and use of toxic products).

Movement is key and the best place to start. You should be aiming to do something that gets you slightly out of breath every day. It can be anything from a half an hour walk through to yoga, pilates, hitting the gym, cycling, swimming... the list goes on. The secret is to start moving and keep moving.

Wearable technology is becoming better and cheaper all the time and devices like FitBits are a great way to track and monitor how much exercise you're getting.



EXERCISES FOR YOUR BACK & TO IMPROVE YOUR POSTURE

Moving your body is an essential part of keeping your body feeling young and pain free.

The following exercise are also really simple to do, can be done at home and will help you build a strong, healthy back and spine.

If you do have any concerns about whether you should be doing any of these exercises please consult with your chiropractor or if you are new to the community, please do not hesitate to call us and ask for a consultation with one of our many experienced chiropractors.

Please do start slowly and stop if there is any pain. Remember the best way to keep your spine supple is to take it through its full range of motion on a daily basis. These exercises will help you in this process.

PART 1: LOW BACK



- 1 Knees to chest** – lying on your back simply bend both knees and draw both knees towards your chest. Hold for 10-20 seconds and repeat 3 times.



- 2 Side to side** – again lying on our back bend both knees and keeping you feet on the ground roll your knees side to side. Either hold for 10-20 seconds each side or repeat moving side to side for 60 seconds.



- 3 Lunge and twist** – standing with feet spit wide apart one forward one backwards. Bend your front knee to 90 degrees and have your back knee either resting on the ground or just hovering off. Keep your body upright and then twist your body toward the side of the bend knee out front. Repeat 10 x each side.

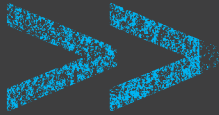


PART 2 : NECK & POSTURE

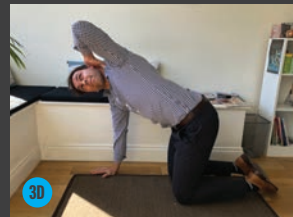
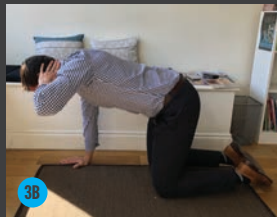
1 Rotation – sit up straight and rotate your head to one side. Turn as far as you can and apply gentle pressure with your hand on the cheek bone. Hold for 10-20 seconds – repeat 3 times each side



2 Side bend – Again sitting tall, head upright, lean your head to one side and with the weight of your hand on the top of your head stretch your neck sideways. Hold for 10-20 seconds and repeat each side.



3 All fours wing lift – on all fours with a neutral spine, lift one hand to rest on the back of your head. Then lead with the elbow downwards and turning your gaze down and sideways stretching your upper back. Then reverse the movement and lift your elbow high and look upwards as far as comfortable. Feel the burn in the upper back.



TREATMENT OPTIONS

WHILE BEING ACTIVE, DOING YOUR BACK AND NECK EXERCISES, AND EATING WELL WILL ALL HELP, SOMETIMES YOUR THRESHOLD IS EXCEEDED AND YOU NEED TO SEEK HELP. BUT WHO DO YOU TURN TO?

Typically, the treatment options available to you are:

- Visiting your GP and taking painkillers
- Consulting a spinal surgeon/consultant
- Acupuncture and other holistic therapies
- Massage
- Physio
- Seeing a chiropractor

The NHS uses the GP as the gatekeeper to work out what treatment is best suited for your needs. However, increasingly, people are taking matters into their own hands. You don't need a referral to visit a chiropractor and can simply get help directly.

Health care professionals like chiropractors, osteopaths, and physio all bring something different to the table and our advice is always find what works for you, what you're comfortable with, and what helps you the most. Not to mention sometimes the GP simply doesn't have the tools or time for helping back pain.





OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP

You can supplement these exercises with some simple steps to follow, all of which will have you feeling healthier, better and stronger. They include:

Eat the rainbow. No, we don't mean eat lots of Skittles! Eating a varied diet, full of natural, colourful ingredients will do wonders for your body and your wellbeing. Food is our fuel and like any machine, the better the fuel that goes in, the better that machine performs. Make sure your diet includes a medley of fresh veg as this will turbo-charge your nutrition, give your immune system a boost and improve your energy levels. You should also avoid a high sugar intake. The combination of high sugar levels and low exercise levels are what's causing a national obesity crisis, especially in children. Unless you're an endurance athlete on a low-carb high-fat diet, you're likely to consume a certain amount of sugar in your diet. However, too much sugar can be a serious impediment to having improved wellbeing. Sugar consumption spikes dopamine levels in our brains and makes

us feel good – that's why we always want to consume more of it. While doing this, it also causes our energy to spike but then crash dramatically once our body has burnt through the sugar high. Some of the worst culprits are fruit juices, smoothies and yogurts. We typically associate these as being 'healthy' but more often than not they are full of sugar. Try to reduce the amount of sugar you consume and you'll soon notice a difference to your overall wellbeing. And while you're at it, you should aim to drink at least 2 litres of water every day.

Sleep. Sleep and recovery are vitally important. If you have trouble sleeping, try some simple things like limiting screen time before you sleep and even trying guided meditation apps like Headspace.

Step outside. Studies have shown that just 5 minutes a day in a green space will boost our mental wellbeing. Getting outside will increase your exposure to vitamin D which is vital to having a strong immune system. Taking a break or time away from the desk just to enjoy the outdoors we leave you feeling full of life.

Listen to your body. Your body is an amazing thing. If something is wrong it will tell you. The trick is to learn how to listen to it and identify when it's telling you something isn't right. Awareness of our bodies helps us improve our overall self-awareness as well as our situational awareness. There are different ways your body will talk to, for example if your resting heart rate rises unexpectedly then you're likely trying to fight off a fever, if your sleep is constantly disrupted then there will be an area of your routine (or lack of routine!) that your body is fighting against, and if you suffer constant pain in certain areas then your body might need readjusting to combat it.



WHAT IS CHIROPRACTIC?

FOUNDED AS A PROFESSION IN 1895 BY DD PALMER, CHIROPRACTIC USES THE SIMPLE IDEA OF USING THE SPINE TO IMPROVE SOMEONE'S HEALTH – WITHOUT THE NEED FOR DRUGS OR SURGERY, ESSENTIALLY 'THE HEALTHY SPINE, HEALTHY YOU' CONCEPT.

Chiropractic works on the simple principle that good spinal alignment leads to improved health, better performance and less pain.

However, chiropractic extends much further than just this simple principle. Whether you're brand new to chiropractic, thinking that it might be good for you or have had adjustments for years we've put together the following so you can discover all you need to know about chiropractic.

Chiropractic relieves pain

By treating the underlying causes and improving body function, chiropractic can bring fantastic pain relief. It helps relieve physical tension in the muscles and emotional tension in the mind. In doing this, the body works more effectively and pain is reduced.



Chiropractic will help you move better

Chiropractic is often regarded as a treatment solely for back problems, but this couldn't be further from the truth. It is based on the idea that by maintaining good spinal alignment, and therefore clear and healthy pathways to and from the central nervous system, the body's ability to self heal is improved. This means we can move better, more easily and in a more natural way.

Chiropractic improves your posture

As well as improving body movement, Chiropractic also improves posture. A recent article in the American Journal of Pain Management said: "Posture affects and moderates every physiologic function from breathing to hormonal production." Poor posture can affect digestion, elimination and breathing. Alongside this, most fit and healthy people have good posture to go alongside it.

Chiropractic ensures a fully functioning nervous system

Our nervous system is the master controller of our bodies. If it's blocked, not functioning correctly or struggling to communicate with our other key systems then this all manifests itself as symptoms throughout our body – whether it's poor sleep or back pain. The nervous system controls and regulates every single cell in your body, hence interference to this important system can have a negative effect on health or performance. Chiropractic treats the cause not the symptom and improves your body function and health while reducing pain.

Chiropractic improves emotional, physical and mental wellbeing

By promoting self-healing and balance within the body, regular chiropractic adjustments, when hand in hand with a healthy lifestyle, improve our emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. We often find our clients develop a greater awareness of their bodies and their environment through regular adjustments. In doing this they actively strive to improve their wellbeing therefore reducing physical, chemical and emotional stress.

Chiropractic helps improve your sleep

Spinal problems or underlying issues can all affect the quality of our sleep. Rest, recovery and a good night's sleep are essential to better wellbeing. Chiropractic, along with many other factors, can help improve the quality of your sleep.

Chiropractic gives you more energy

By moving better, having a fully-functioning nervous system, sleeping better and being in less pain, our clients find they have much more energy as a result. Good energy levels are big factors in wellbeing and self-esteem. Active and energetic people usually feel healthier, stronger and much better about themselves.



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