



Mind Your Posture: Keep Kids Moving

The British Chiropractic Association advises parents to keep their kids moving

Leading increasingly sedentary lifestyles places all of us at greater risk of developing back pain. As such behaviour is now starting much earlier in life, parents are seeing the need to take positive action with their children, especially teenagers, in order to promote better posture and back health as well as developing good habits for adulthood.

Get moving - The fitter they are the more children's backs can withstand periods of sitting still. Try weekend family walks and encourage cycling or walking instead of chauffeuring them around! Sports activities at school are also a great way of getting fit and keeping the back muscles fit and healthy.

Computer Sense - It's so much better to use a computer, including laptops and tablets, at a desk. Sitting with arms relaxed and resting on the desk when typing will give some much needed support. The top of the screen should be level with the eyebrows, so you might need to put the monitor on a book or ream of paper. A laptop screen can be used this way if a plug-in keyboard is used. The desk chair should be tilted slightly forward, allowing for the knees to be lower than the hips. Feet should always be flat on the floor. There is a lot of low cost equipment that you can use to help achieve the ideal posture. Using a laptop or tablet away from a desk really does encourage poor posture, so it's best limit time spent in this way.

Don't sit still for too long - When playing on a Playstation, Xbox or just watching TV, it's easy to stay sat in one position. Kids should be encouraged to take a break on a regular basis and stretch their arms, shrug their shoulders and

move their fingers around - this helps to keep the muscles more relaxed. Every 20 minutes or so is ideal!

Keep it light - The lighter your child keeps their school/college bag the better. Teenagers tend to have a lot of heavy books and different pieces of kit to carry each day. Check the contents of bag(s) every day and make sure that only those items needed each time are there. It is surprising how many children (and adults!) carry unnecessary weight in their bags.

A rucksack-style schoolbag is always best and this should be worn on both shoulders, with the straps adjusted so that the bag is held close to the back. If your child wants to use a single strap bag/briefcase, make sure it's one with a longer strap, so it can be worn cross-body as this will still distribute weight more evenly.

Sleep easy - One thing that often gets forgotten about is that mattresses do wear out and stop giving the support they did when new. Most mattresses will need replacing after 7-10 years, whether for children or adults.

When buying a mattress, the key is to take your child with you as they have to try them out. Trying the different options is key, as you want to make sure that their spine is parallel to the mattress and not sagging (mattress too soft) or bowing (mattress too hard). Pay attention to their pillow too, as this is the key to maintaining the straight spine position.

Lead by example! - Maintaining good posture and promoting good back health is something that everyone should be doing, adults and children alike. If parents make it a priority, it's easier for their children to see the relevance.

You can get some great advice on all aspects of great posture on the British Chiropractic Association website: bit.ly/bcapostureinf

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