

Are you Sitting Comfortably: Part 2

Positioning Yourself in the Chair Once you Have Landed

How and where the pressure goes through your bottom while sitting on a chair can be the difference between achiness and comfort. Naturally, *not* sitting for long periods is ideal, but when you do have to sit, it is important that you have your bottom correctly positioned on the chair! Anyone who is sitting at a computer for work and particularly in a new set up (eg working from home) could benefit from reading the following.....



As we sit for longer periods of time, our thighs tend to slide forward on the chair and we end up sitting on the fleshy parts of our buttocks. The pelvis starts to tilt backwards and our low back is pushed in to the chair back. We are progressing towards a slumped posture. There is a strain being put through the lower back that, if maintained, will cause the body tissue in this area to become painful.

We know that this is a bad position to be sat in, so periodically we sit upright by arching the lower back and lifting the rib cage (I should point out that how often we adjust is often governed by the concentration needed on the computer screen – the harder the work task, the longer we tend to go without adjusting). Anatomically this corrective movement forces the lower back into an arched curve (the position it is supposed to be in but under stress) and compresses the mid back (back of the rib cage around the area a bra strap sits). We have effectively robbed Peter to pay Paul, but we haven't even paid Paul that well. There is now a shearing forward force in the low back and a compressive force in the mid back. Not good news for achiness and pain.



More idyllic sitting involves using the bony bits under your bottom as a sitting base. The ischial tuberosities (or sitting bones as they are also known) are at the base of the pelvis (you can feel them if you press up under your butt cheeks (or up in the folds where the bottom cheek meets the upper thigh)). If, rather

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than sitting on the fleshy part of the bottom, our weight is directed into the chair through these bony areas (the sits bones), the effort to sit in a good posture is markedly reduced and therefore the onset of pain is also markedly reduced.

How we achieve a sitting position is something that we routinely screen in clinic and is covered in Are You Sitting Comfortably Part 1. However, once we are sitting, how do we maintain the pelvis in a good position, such that the weight is going through the bones and not through the fleshy area? It is time to introduce the 'booty scooch' (an old posture trick taught to us at Bodymechanics years ago). This was not named by us but does describe the movement rather well. The 'booty scooch' manoeuvre is as follows and is used to realign the pelvis to its original good sitting position if it has slipped towards a slump:

- In sitting place your right hand under your butt cheek.
- Roll your weight on to the left cheek.
- Grab you right butt cheek, lift it and pull / move it backwards until your bottom hits the back of the chair.
- Now release your right hand and slide your left hand under your left butt cheek.
- Take your weight to the right cheek and use your left hand to repeat the manoeuvre to the left cheek, that you did to the right.
- Remove your left hand and now the back of both butt cheeks are pressing on to the back of the chair and you can feel your 'sits bones (or ischial tuberosities) pressing into the seat.

This movement achieves a preferable sitting position for the bottom and therefore pelvis, but you still need to make sure the top half of the body is doing the right thing. There is more to sitting than meets the eye and further information will detail how we achieve our sitting position and how the body is positioned when at a workstation. In the meantime, give the 'booty scooch' a try and see how it feels. Hopefully it will leave you feeling like you are sitting more comfortably.....

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