

Are You Sitting Safely?

PEOPLE TODAY SPEND the majority of the day seated at their desks. In fact, most people don't tend to give much thought to the act of sitting until they can no longer ignore their chronic back or neck pain caused by poor sitting habits. Actually, the simple act of sitting can be hard on the back. And prolonged sitting can stress the back, shoulders and neck, leading to chronic pain syndromes. However, you don't have to accept a life of aches and pains. Follow these suggestions to help you sit safely and protect your back. The chair you use is as important as your posture. Next time you are in the office, notice the following features about your chair:

- The seat height from the floor is very important. When you sit in your chair with your low back supported, your feet should rest flat on the floor, and your hips should be parallel to or slightly higher than your knees. If your feet dangle, or if your knees are bent so you feel cramped, you will be stressing your lower back, as well as the nerves and blood vessels to your legs.
- The seat pan should fit your size. While sitting with your low back supported, there should be a two- or three-finger wide space between the back of your knees and the front of the seat.

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How to Think Like a Successful Person

THINKING LIKE A SUCCESSFUL PERSON ISN'T AS SIMPLE AS THINKING POSITIVE. Success is a complicated concept that can mean different things to different people.

Keep in mind the following wisdom from some of the world's most successful people as you pursue your success.

Have a Vision

"Champions aren't made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them: A desire, a dream, a vision." — Muhammad Ali

Take your values and turn them into a vision for your life. Describe your vision in detail, then visualize what you want. Be flexible, and adjust your vision as you gain more knowledge and new insights.

Feel Deserving

"It is better to deserve honors and not have them, than to have them and not deserve them." — Mark Twain

Successful people believe they deserve success because they're giving something of value to others.

Be Willing to Work Hard

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure." — Colin Powell

Not all the paths to success are filled with fun and excitement. Many are filled with difficult or boring tasks. Be willing to do whatever is necessary to achieve success.



Make a Commitment

"Eighty percent of success is showing up." — Woody Allen

Plan your success goals using a calendar. That will give structure to your days, weeks and months. Never give up until your vision becomes reality.

Create a Success Team

"Individual commitment to a group effort — that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." — Vince Lombardi

People don't succeed all by themselves. You'll need the cooperation of your family, friends and coworkers. You may need to consult with experts, take training classes to learn new skills and enlist others to help.

It's your responsibility to define what success means to you, and then to take the steps necessary to turn your vision into reality.

what's new

Late-Breaking Health News

>>More Americans than ever are buckling up. A survey by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in 2003 found that seat belt use in the United States was at 79 percent, four percentage points higher than a year earlier.

The survey found that users of sport utility vehicles and vans have the highest use rates, at 83 percent, while pickup truck drivers have the lowest rates, at 69 percent.

Seat belt usage was highest in the West, at 84 percent, and the South, at 80 percent. It was lowest in the Midwest, at 75 percent, and the Northeast, at 74 percent. The survey also found belt use was 6 percent higher in states with primary seat belt laws, which allow police to ticket occupants solely for failing to wear a seat belt.

The 79 percent usage rate is more than five times higher than in 1983, when seat belt surveys first began. The national rate that year was 14 percent.

>>Several risk factors for prostate cancer are known, but scientists still aren't sure why some men develop the disease and others don't.

Several studies are under way to explore how prostate cancer might be prevented. These include the use of dietary supplements, such as vitamin E and selenium. In addition, recent studies suggest a diet that regularly includes tomato-based foods may help protect against the disease.

Some aspects of a man's lifestyle may affect his chances of developing prostate cancer. For example, some evidence suggests a link between diet and this disease. Studies show prostate cancer is more common in populations that consume a high-fat diet (particularly animal fat), and in populations that have diets lacking certain nutrients.



>>VITAMINS AND EXERCISE MAY SLOW THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF AGING.

One study of men and women over 40 found those who exercised regularly and took vitamin E supplements became healthier and significantly decreased their levels of a blood marker that signals the destruction of certain cells by free radicals. That process, known as free radical-induced oxidative stress, contributes to aging and disease.


Study participants who did not exercise but still took vitamin E also showed significant decreases in oxidative stress and blood pressure, according to the study published in the journal *Biological Research for Nursing*. Good sources of vitamin E include spinach, almonds and avocados. But most people are vitamin E deficient, because it can be difficult to get enough of the antioxidant from diet alone.

Other studies have shown that free radicals play a role in the development of cancer, obstructed arteries, Alzheimer's disease and some 200 other diseases.

See your physician for guidance and advice regarding a specific health condition.

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Recognizing Postpartum Depression

ARE MOOD SWINGS AFTER GIVING BIRTH merely a passing case of the blues? Or are they a sign of something more serious, such as postpartum depression?

"Postpartum depression is exactly the same thing as major depression; it just happens to occur after pregnancy," says Candace Brown, Pharm.D., associate professor of pharmacy practice, obstetrics/gynecology and psychiatry at the University of Tennessee.

Symptoms include lasting feelings of sadness or unworthiness, reduced concentration or loss of memory, and listlessness. Some women also feel guilty for not bonding instantly with their baby.

Postpartum depression can start any time in the year after birth but often occurs between the third and sixth weeks, Dr. Brown says. It needs treatment — usually counseling and prescription of an antidepressant.

Fewer than a fifth of new mothers suffer from postpartum depression, Dr. Brown says, but your risk increases if you've suffered from depression before. That risk may be compounded by poor coping skills or a strained marriage.

Unlike postpartum depression, the postpartum blues is fairly common and doesn't require treatment. It's a fleeting episode of sadness, weepiness, anxiety, irritability or difficulty in thinking clearly that occurs during the week after giving birth. Blame it on changing levels of hormones, the demands of motherhood, the reality of pregnancy ending, or a combination. It usually passes in a week or so.

>>For More Information

You can find articles on the US Department of Health and Human Services' site for women's health: www.4woman.gov

Paybacks for Lost Sleep

YOU MAY HAVE YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER, your bills paid and your budget on track. But if you find it hard to get out of bed in the morning, or feel like falling asleep after lunch, or regularly look forward to the weekend to catch up on your ZZZZs, you may be in debt up to your eyeballs.

Sleep debt, that is, **Sleep debt affects both your body and your mind — seriously**

It's not as funny as it sounds. Until your body starts getting the sleep it needs every night — most people need 8 hours, say the experts — it won't function as efficiently, your health will be at risk and even your job may be in jeopardy.

Over the last hundred years, our average nightly sleep has dropped from 9 to 7.5 hours, with a third of adults now getting an hour less than that.

The Downside of Staying Up

Researchers know that a lack of deep sleep — as opposed to irregular or fragmented sleep — undermines the body's ability to fight off disease. Sleepiness also reduces the quality and quantity of people's work by a third, says Pat Britz, program director at NSF. Nearly one in four of those under 30 say they're sometimes late to work because they're too sleepy to get up.

And where you find sleepiness, say experts, you find sleep debt.

In research at the University of Chicago, a group of sleep-deprived men was found to have higher concentrations of sugar in their blood than those fully rested. That could contribute to development of a pre-diabetic condition.



Eve Van Cauter, Ph.D., a professor of medicine involved in the study, says, "Our ongoing research suggests that the effects of semi-chronic sleep loss may be as profound as those of physical inactivity."

A Prescription for Better Sleep

- Go to bed at the same time every night, even on weekends. It keeps your biological clock synchronized.
- Establish a pre-bedtime routine — brushing your teeth or reading — that lets your body know it's time for sleep.
- Avoid caffeine six hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco two hours before bedtime.
- Get up at the same time every day, no matter when you went to sleep.
- Exercise regularly. Those who do sleep better.
- Look to your sleep environment. Sleep in a dark, cool, quiet room on a comfortable mattress.

>>For More Information

Visit the National Sleep Foundation at www.sleepfoundation.org

Learning the Power of Patience

YOU KNOW THE PRICE YOU PAY FOR BEING IMPATIENT — a tightening of the chest, rise in blood pressure and surge of irritation and anger directed at a person or circumstance.

But have you considered the gifts that come with being patient? You make better decisions, reduce your stress and anger and increase your peace of mind.

“Patience with yourself, with other people and with the big and small circumstances of life is a determining factor in your peace of mind,” says M.J. Ryan, author of *The Power Of Patience*.

Ryan defines patience as the capacity to stop before you act so you’re clearly able to decide the best course of action or choose the right words to say instead of simply reacting. Patience accomplishes this by bringing these three qualities of mind and heart together:

- **PERSISTENCE** — patience gives you the ability to work steadily toward your goals and dreams.
- **SERENITY** — patience gives you calmness of spirit. Rather than being thrown into anger, panic or fear by circumstance, you can put it into perspective and keep your cool.
- **ACCEPTANCE** — patience gives you the ability to cope with obstacles graciously and respond to life’s challenges with courage, strength and optimism.



Patience Boosters

“Patience is something you do, not something you have or don’t have,” says Ryan. “It’s a decision you make again and again. Patience is a quality that can be strengthened like a muscle.”

To strengthen your patience:

- **REFRAME THE SITUATION** by asking yourself one question: How else could I look at this situation that would increase the possibility of a good outcome or greater peace of mind?
- **REMINDE YOURSELF THAT CHANGE IS INEVITABLE.** When times are tough, it’s helpful to remember that this, too, shall pass. Doing so gives you the strength, hope and patience needed to carry on.
- **ASK FOR HELP.** Lots of times we’re impatient because we’re overloaded.

“There’s no prize at the end of your life for doing too much, particularly doing it in a frazzled state,” says Ryan.

“Perhaps you will encourage others to be more patient as well,” says Ryan.

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■ The backrest should be adjusted to provide support for the small of your back. Utilizing a rolled towel or cushion may be necessary if your chair does not provide for this adjustment. If the chair back is able to tilt, adjust it to your level of semi-upright comfort.

■ If the chair has armrests, they should be adjustable. The armrests should also be at least two inches wide and cushioned. You should be able to adjust the armrests so that your elbows and forearms can rest comfortably without raising your shoulders.

Even with a chair that fits properly, sitting for prolonged periods of time can be hard on the back. This is because prolonged sitting results in diminished nutrition to the spinal discs, as well as decreased blood flow to muscles. Be sure to change your position often and take frequent breaks. Get up, stretch and perform circulation exercises even if it’s for only a few seconds every 15 to 20 minutes.

Movement results in improved circulation to the muscles in your lower back and legs. A combination of supportive sitting postures, alternating work tasks, and frequent movement will minimize the likelihood of musculoskeletal aches and pains. It will also keep you productive and feeling spiffy!

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