

Sitting Tall for Maximum Comfort *Ann-Marie Hope Allen*

Many of us spend a good deal of time sitting at our desk or work table. Are you comfortable after you have been sitting for a long period of time? Do you feel "tight" and "strained" when you get up? What causes these problems and what can you do to avoid them? Let me share some information and tips that can help.

The *way* we sit is so important. When we sit properly, our hips are all the way back into the chair, our lower back is supported and our head and neck then **balance** on the top of our spine. Notice also that our wrist can be supported (allowing fingers to be lower than wrist)

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

When you do not sit upright, the balance aspect is gone. Over time, your muscles can become tight and overused. One small movement in the wrong direction will cause a spasm and, suddenly, you have a stiff neck or intense pain in one shoulder.



Here are some specific tips to avoid these problems:

1. First, check to see that you are sitting properly, hips all the way back in your chair with your neck and head upright and your feet touching the floor. You want to make sure that your lower back is supported (use of a lumbar cushion is good) and that your elbows are resting on the arms of the chair. Sitting in the right position is the key to everything else in terms of maintaining comfort and ease of movement.

2. When talking on the phone, avoid holding the phone between your head and shoulder. This is one of the worst things you can do because it causes a tightening of your neck and shoulder, resulting in possible long standing pain. Instead, use a headset, speakerphone or just hold the receiver in your hand!

3. At the computer, remember that the monitor should be at eye level so that your neck is not tilted down or up, but is straight. When using a mouse or touch pad, ideally your elbows should be supported to relieve strain on your shoulders. To avoid carpal tunnel pain when typing, you should have your wrists supported and your fingers lower than your wrist. Use of a wrist rest pad can be beneficial.

A more complete explanation of ways to sit and move comfortably is available in the book *Staying Flexible*. For more information, please visit my website at www.imflexible.com.