

# Sofa, so bad ...why posture is paramount for back pain

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EVENINGS spent lounging on the sofa watch TV could be making us ill, according to chiropractor Arif Soomro.

Arif believes people should be squatting rather than sitting down and should try to avoid the sofa at all costs.

Arif and his wife and fellow chiropractor Melanie opened the award winning Cliffs Chiropractic Clinic, Westcliff, in 1994.

He says: “Humans are not designed to sit down for long periods of time. I practise what I preach and I don’t ever sit on my sofa, I don’t even go into the living room.

“I get up at 5am and run 2k on the treadmill, I mostly stand while I am work and then when I do sit down I either squat or sit on a sloped chair.”

The clinic gives presentations to businesses on how workers can look after their backs and overall health.

“Lots of people are hunched over their desks for many hours while they are at work. When you are stooped over it means you cannot breathe as deeply, you will have less oxygen in your body which means less energy and less quality of life,” explains Arif.

“As soon as you sit up straight, with your shoulders back, and knees below your hips you can breathe so much more deeply. Your overall health is instantly improved.”

Sitting incorrectly can effect more areas than just the back.

He says: “When people are hunched over their desks they are added a strain equivalent to 60 pounds of pressure on the back of their neck.

“It creates tightness down the back and shoulders and can cause a pinched headache.

“It is not just back pain but the wider issues and the effects on people’s quality of life. If people are in pain they are not living life to the full.”

The team takes a holistic approach to the health of their patients and offer a range of treatments including: acupuncture, craniopathy, nutritional advice, posture training, sports therapy, remedial massage, jaw problems and Stott Pilates classes.



■ **Get squatting - chiropractor Arif Soomro says sofas cause back problems and we should squat rather than sit**

Arif, who has recently been elected to the Council of the British Chiropractic Association, says: “We treat all aspects of the patient’s health: the physical, mental and chemical. The physical side is how they move and their flexibility, the mental

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side is their emotional wellbeing and the chemical is a patient’s stress levels.

“This is why we offer a range of treatments to treat patients. It is also why we win awards because of our forward thinking.”

A check up with Arif costs £50 for a half hour session, X-rays costs £69 for one and £89 for two and each treatment is £39.

If a patient is referred by a friend then it costs £25 for the check-up.

in Ingatestone ten years ago to help the children there. We got them to agree to invest in adjustable chairs to make sure all of the children were sitting correctly.

“It was the first time it had been done and it was shown on Newsround on the BBC.

“Unfortunately the seats have since been removed as they were deemed too expensive even though they are very durable and worth the money.

“I hope one day all schools have adjustable chairs and tables for children.”

I ask Arif what parents should be doing at home to make sure their kids are sitting correctly.

“There isn’t a lot on the market for children at the moment.

“Sloped chairs and slope desks at home are good for everyone and you can buy wedges for dining room chairs with a 30 degree angle. The Scandinavian design chairs that adjust are good but not perfect.

“The most natural way is to squat like people do in India. You see people in their 70s squatting there because they have down it their whole lives so it is good to get children practising now.”

“Everyone would benefit from coming to the clinic for a screening. We go to the dentist to have our teeth checked and have our eyes checked every year but we only have one spine but do not look after it.”

One area of expertise which Arif is passionate about is being a paediatric chiropractor.

He is one of few chiropractors who specialises in working with children and is a fellow of the International Chiropractic Paediatric Association, a member of the UK’s College of Chiropractic Paediatric Faculty and a professional member of BackCare, the national charity for back pain.

Arif says: “I love working with children because it means that we can catch problems early and then they will not suffer as adults years down the line.”

Arif believe there is not enough being done to help children achieve good posture and overall health.

He says: “Children are all different sizes but their desks and chairs at school are the same size.

“I worked with a school