

**Action for Carers Surrey –
Surrey Young Carers
INFORMATION PACK:
*Helping to look after
someone with a physical
disability***

June 2020



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1. Introduction

Caring for a physically disabled person can make your daily life more challenging.

It can be physically and emotionally demanding for you as a carer. It is normal to feel a range of emotions such as contentment, frustration as well as a sense of purpose.

This pack gives some information about physical disabilities and the challenges you may face every day. We want to make sure we help you to look after yourselves, as well as safely helping the people you care for.

We hope that you find this pack useful.

2. What is a physical disability?

A physical disability is a difficulty or problem with the body. Physical disabilities may affect the eyes, the ears, the muscles, or the interior organs, such as the heart or lungs. Some people with a physical disability may use a wheelchair, or other mobility aids, to move around.

Types of physical disabilities, their causes, and the manner in which they impact a person's life are wide-ranging and virtually limitless.

3. Some examples of physical disabilities

Everyone with a physical disability will have their own individual symptoms and difficulties. They may not have the same symptoms as someone else with that disability, even though they have the same diagnosis. Here are few examples of physical disabilities many people continue to live their lives alongside.

Brain Injuries

Spinal Cord Injuries

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Cerebral Palsy

Visual Impairments

Hearing Impairments

Amputation

Scoliosis

ME/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Fibromyalgia

Heart Condition

Respiratory Disorders

Mobility Issues

Diabetes

For more information on all physical disabilities please visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/>

4. How a physical disability might be affecting me

As a young carer who cares for someone with a physical disability, you are probably offering a **helping hand** every single day, in fact, probably more times than you can count on your **helpful hand!**

This **practical help** might be in lots of different places, it could be at your home, or it may be away from your home.

Here is a list of some examples that you *might* be doing:

QUESTION-What do ALL of the jobs in the list of examples have in common?

- **BEDROOM** – You pick things up off the floor when tidying
STAIRS - You offer to carry some dirty washing up or down the stairs or to a different room
- **BATHROOM** – It might be your turn to clean the bath
- **KITCHEN** - You might LOVE loading the dishwasher or washing up after a meal
- **HIGHCHAIR** - You might be asked to help to take your little brother or sister out of their chair after eating
- **CAR** – You need to help to lift shopping bags from the trolley to the car boot

ANSWER - All of these jobs in the list put some kind of strain onto YOUR body

The everyday jobs listed may only be **some** of the **many tasks** you might be doing **every day** to help out.

A lot of the time you will do the jobs without thinking of yourself. This makes you a **very generous and helpful young person**. What makes you even more special is the fact you do these jobs for *other* people in order to make their lives easier.

Surrey Young Carers recognise the work you do, but we also want *you* to realise that this work might mean you are placing extra strains and stresses onto **your body**.

The next section '**Looking after me**' will give you some helpful information on how you can carry on being your **wonderful, helpful self** - whilst also thinking about what your body might be going through when you are helping. The '**Looking after me**' section will also allow you to think about what your body may go through whilst you are taking some very valuable time for yourself; such as, when you are sitting down, playing games or even lying down for a well-earned nap.

5. Looking after me

Staying safe whilst being your wonderful, helpful self

Has anyone ever told you, '*Stand up straight!*', or said you are *slouching* at a family dinner? Comments like that might be annoying, but they're **NOT** wrong. Your **posture**, the way you hold your body when you're sitting or standing, is the foundation for every movement your body makes, and your posture can decide how well your body adapts to the strains on it.

As a young carer for someone with a physical disability, you may be more likely to have stresses and strains on **your body**.

You may find yourself being asked to help out in situations where you should be thinking about **your body** at its **posture**.

What is good posture?

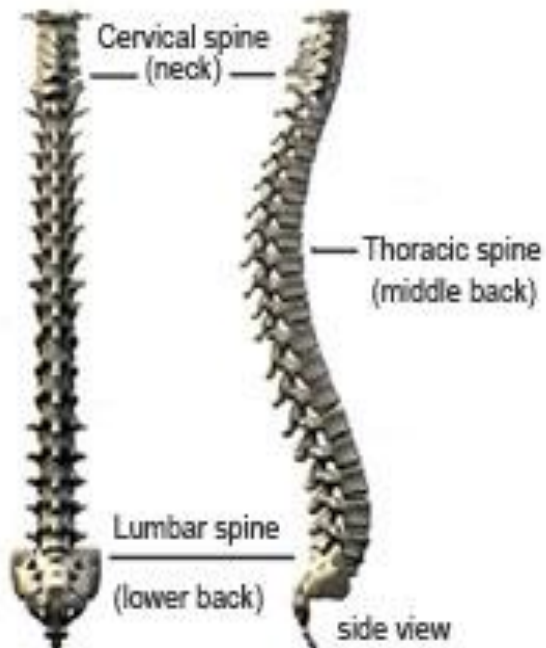
Posture is the position in which you hold your body and limbs when standing, sitting, or lying down.

To have **good posture** means that you need to be aware of always holding yourself in a way that puts the **least strain on your back**, whatever you are doing.



Having good posture means:

- Your bones and joints are **in line** so that muscles can be used properly
- Your spine has its **3 normal** curves
- Ligaments holding the spine together are **not** being stressed
- You **may not** get tired so quickly
- You **lower the risk** of getting pain in your back or other muscles



To have good posture, you will need:

- Strong, flexible muscles, especially each side of the spine
- Well balanced muscles, not over-developed on one side
- To be able to move freely
- To be aware of your posture and work to improve it

Here is a website link to a really useful video about good posture. It is only 4 minutes long – if you can, please take a look:

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-benefits-of-good-posture-murat-dalkinic>

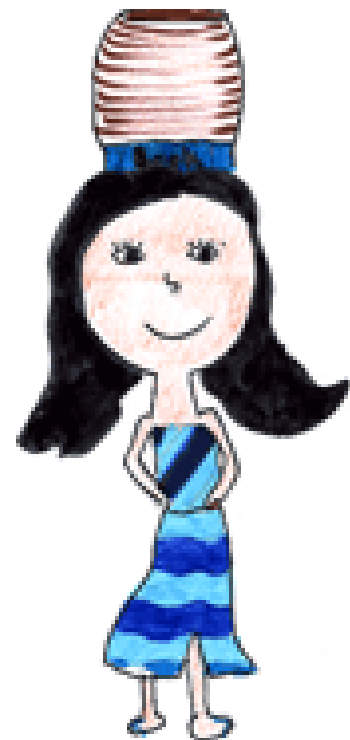
*Regular exercise like **running, walking, cycling, and playing different sports** will help to keep your back strong and therefore help towards a good posture!*

Standing up

To have good posture when you are standing, you need to **practise** maintaining a good posture.

Here is a short exercise to help you practise:

1. Stand in front of the mirror.
2. Holding your head up and chin in, look straight ahead.
3. Put your shoulders back.
4. Tuck your tummy in.
5. Keep your knees straight.
6. Take a deep breath and relax your shoulders.
7. Keep your chest forward.
8. Standing for a long time is tiring, so try to rest one foot at a time a bit higher up than the other, like on a step, or a stool.
9. Slumping sideways into your hip is not good posture and can strain your back muscles. Try to move about rather than standing in one position for too long.

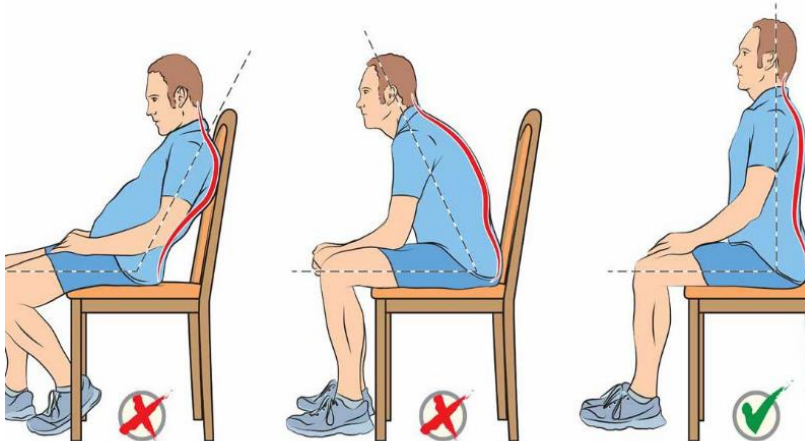


Sitting down

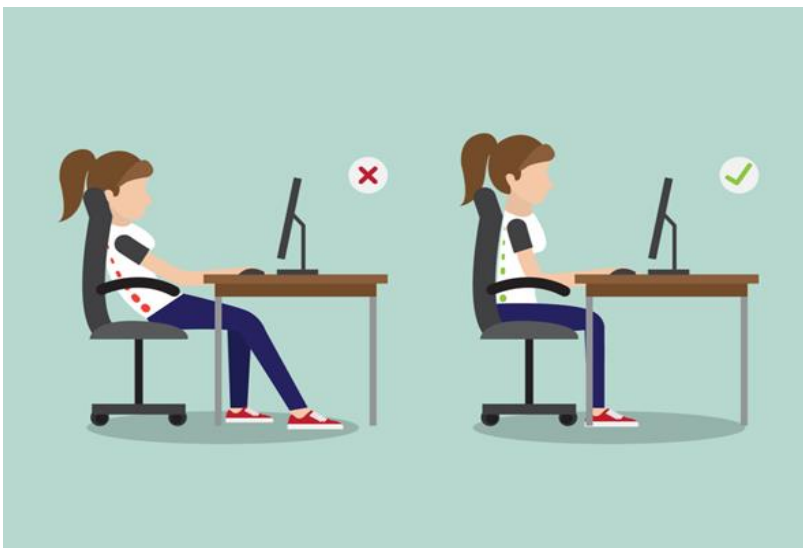
When you sit, try to keep your back straight.

- Put your back against the backrest of the chair
- Your knees should make a right angle
- Feet flat on the floor
- Don't cross your legs

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- On a computer? Your chair should be moved to fit you
- Don't lean forward. Sit back and stretch your arms out to the keyboard
- Bring your chair up close to the keyboard so that you can rest your arms on the chair or desk. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Sitting like this is the least stressful way for your back.
- If you are playing computer or video games, be aware that your shoulders may be hunching up as you get more excited.
- You need to rest and move around every 30 minutes to let your body relax.
- Try bending back a few times to stretch your muscles and help them relax.



Lifting things

- Never anything by yourself that is an awkward shape or is more than a quarter of your body weight.
- Always bend your knees and straighten your legs as you lift. This way your leg muscles are doing the work not your back muscles.
- Use a trolley if you must move something heavy.
- To lift something, put your feet apart, hold the object close to your body and keep your arms bent. This way you are using your arm muscles and not pulling on shoulder and back muscles.
- Never lift anything higher than your waist.
- Bend your legs and hips, tighten your tummy muscles, and use your leg muscles to help you lower the object down again.



Lying down

Even when you are lying down or sleeping, you can look after your posture by:

- Keeping the natural curves in your back
- Lying on your side with your knees bent
- Lying with your head on one pillow so that your spine is in a natural position.

Thinking about good posture and being careful to look after your spine will help you to have a strong healthy back. In the 'olden days', young people were made to practise walking around balancing books on their heads to improve their posture. You don't need to do that, but you may want to try it out to see how straight and tall you can stand and how good your balance is.



6. Who can help?

Under 18s

If you feel like you are currently doing jobs at home which are consequently placing **too much strain and stress on your body**, then you need to talk to a responsible adult about this.

If, after this chat, you have decided together that you may need help with this particular area of your caring role, then it is at this point that you and the responsible adult should look to get in touch with **Surrey Young Carers**. We will be very happy to talk to you about your concerns and find out how we can further support you.

Surrey Young Carers (part of Action for Carers Surrey). Call us on 01483 568269 or email syc@actionforcarers.org.uk And read lots more on our website <https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/who-we-help/young-carers-under-18/>



Over 18s

If there is an adult (over 18) in your house who helps to look after the 'cared for' and they feel like they are putting too much strain and stress on their body, then they can contact our **Moving and Handling Support service**, for advice, information, training and support.

If you live in **Guildford, Waverley, Mole Valley, Tandridge, Reigate** or **Banstead**, the support comes from Action for Carers' Moving and Handling service. To find out more about how they can help, give them a call or drop them an email:

0303 040 1234 – movingandhandling@actionforcarers.org.uk

If you live in **Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge, Runnymede, Spelthorne, Woking** or **Surrey Heath**, the support comes from White Lodge. To find out more about how they can help, give them a call or drop them an email:

01932 577993 - mhadvisors@whitelodgecentre.co.uk



Surrey Young Carers, part of Action for Carers Surrey

Call on **01483 568269** or email syc@actionforcarers.org.uk

www.actionforcarers.org.uk

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