

# HELEN TO THE RESCUE

## Floor Time BY HELEN PUFAHL, RESIDENT CONTRIBUTOR

Humans have rested on the ground for thousands of years using variations of a squat, cross-legged, or kneeling position. Despite the availability of chairs and other things, sitting on the floor is still common in many cultures. Although chairs seemed like a predominantly European fixture, the ancient Egyptians created the world's first chairs, dating back to 2600 BC. The chair represented status. The king sat in his chair to be high above his subjects. Today's chair represents a struggle between gravity and human anatomy.

It turns out that those kindergarten teachers who made us sit crisscross applesauce were onto something. Today's generation sits more than the generation that came before them. Excessive sitting has been associated with a shorter lifespan, not to mention all kinds of aches and pains.

When you sit on a chair in a right-angle fashion and do so for the ridiculous amount of time that many of our lives demand, the relationship between your upper thigh bones,

pelvis, and hip joints suffer, making it harder to keep your torso stable. Your body solves this problem by enlisting the long back and leg muscles to keep your upper body from moving in various directions. The

efforts of those muscles take a toll, tugging on your spine and creating discomfort, low back pain, and tightening of your hip flexors, to name a few.

How often has your back felt tight and achy when you get up from a long bout of sitting in a chair?

### WHY IS SITTING ON THE FLOOR SO IMPORTANT?

It helps undo some of the body's compensatory positions after sitting in a chair for hours. Our bodies are built to sit in ground-based positions. If you regularly sit on the floor, you cannot only improve your posture and flexibility but also strengthen your core. Floor sitting engages muscles in the core and back that are not used while sitting in a chair. Floor time may even help prevent slouching and reduce neck, shoulders, and spine pain over time. It also creates more mobility, thus helping you fend off the limitations of aging, as well as deflect the sore backs, hunched shoulders, and creaky necks that come from long hours in front of computer screens, interminable commutes, and other detrimental facets of modern life. And this is true for everyone.

### SO, WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO SIT?

A comfortable sitting position will vary from person to person; the key to good sitting is regular movement and changing your position often. This could be just side to side, standing up and stretching. Listen to your body; it will tell you what it needs.

*I don't run from my problems. I sit on my couch, play on my phone and ignore them like all other adults!*

Yours in Fitness,

### HELEN PUFAHL MS, NASM-CPT

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Helen's love of fitness began at an early age. She practiced dance and gymnastics as well as track and field. She's an Exercise Physiologist with over 35 years of experience. She is also a certified personal trainer, corrective exercise specialist, nutrition consultant and Senior fitness specialist.



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