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## W SITTING

### The truth about W-sitting and when to seek PT for your child

Have you noticed your child W sits?

You may have heard from parents, clinicians, teachers, the internet and social media that W sitting is bad for your child. The question is, **is it really *that* bad and when should you as a parent be concerned?** Well, we are here to lay it all out for you in an easy-to-read format!

So, let's break this down.

There are many studies in literature that have come out for adults & children stating that it's not always necessarily *how* you sit, but *how long* you sit in one position for. **W sitting is a concern if it is the primary floor position a child uses, and they are unable to get in/out of this position easily during play.**

If you notice your child has made a consistent habit of prolonged W sitting, the next thing to look at is how they are positioned:

There are two styles of W sitting: *Can you spot the difference between these two photos?*

**A.**



*Image credit: Getty images*

**B.**



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In **photo A** you can see that the inside of the child's knees and the inside of each foot are laying flat on the ground. When this position is used as a **primary, consistent, & habitual** sitting position, it can create prolonged forces from the floor that impact the ligaments of the knees, ankles, and feet.

These forces can result in increased external rotation in range of motion, low back pain, blocking of the ability to use the gluteal and abdominal muscles, and can cause a hip muscle imbalance leading to diminished muscle strength (Cusick, 2020). The results may be instability in the ankles and inability to use/control muscles within the hip that are required to reach many gross motor developmental milestones (Cusick, 2020).



In **photo B** the child's knees and feet are stacked on top of one another, in what is called a neutral position. Due to the neutral alignment of the hips/ knees/ feet, this position is not a reason for immediate concern that requires therapy.

Instead, to ensure a child's ability to move in and out of the W sitting position, and to help them develop strength and mobility, you can demonstrate alternative ways of sitting. Alternative sitting positions include side sitting, tailor sitting (criss cross applesauce!), long sitting (legs out straight in front), ring sitting (legs in front to form a ring shape with feet touching to complete the circle), and tall kneeling.

So, **does your child need PT?** Answer a few simple questions to find out:

**1. When your child W sits, are their legs positioned as in this photo?**



*Image credit: Getty images*

**2. Does your child tend to stay W-seated in this position for a prolonged period (is it a consistent & habitual position)?**



*Image credit: Rob Wilson*

**3. Is your child unable to easily transition in and out of a W sitting position during play?**

If you answered **NO** to the above questions > your child does not require therapy for W sitting at this time.

If you answered **YES** to one or more of these questions > we recommend scheduling an evaluation with one of our licensed physical therapists. They'll assess and address any potential impairments related to your child's W sitting, and recommend a treatment plan to help them reach their developmental milestones.

Contact us to schedule a PT evaluation for your child:

425-481-1933

<https://bpanth.com/intake>

Visit our website to learn more about PT and how it can help your child thrive:

<https://bpanth.com/pediatric-physical-therapy>

