

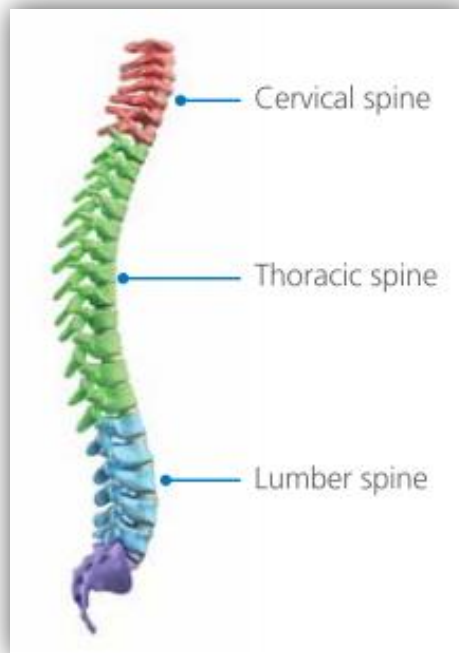


Posture Guide

What is posture?

Posture is the position in which you hold your body against gravity while standing, sitting or lying down. Improving posture involves training your body to stand, walk, sit and lie in a variety of positions so that you can tolerate load and vary your movement.

The problems arise when we stay in ANY one position for too long. Over time, due to repeated static postures we lose our ability to vary our posture. This may be due to some muscles becoming shorter and tighter or other muscles becoming weaker. As a result, we find it more difficult to change our position. We lose our muscle memory of how to vary our posture and instead we find it easier to just adopt one or two postural sets. Staying in one position for too long causes our tissues to fatigue and overload – no matter what the posture is.



The picture above shows what good spine posture looks like (what we call a neutral spine position). When you look at a spine from behind it should look like it runs in a straight line but when viewed from the side, it should have natural curves.

So, what's the answer?

The key to good posture is to have the ability to move, control and vary your posture. Avoid developing restrictions, tightness or weakness that limits your ability to vary your posture by challenging your movement control. So, keep moving and keep active!

Good sitting posture

If you work at a desk it is important to adjust your workstation so that your body is comfortable in general:

- Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.
- Bend your knees at a right angle and have your feet flat on the floor (use a foot rest or stool if necessary).
- Keep your knees hip distance apart and slightly lower than your hips. Your legs should not be crossed.
- Try to avoid sitting in the same position for more than 30 minutes.
- Rest your elbows and arms on your chair or desk, keeping your shoulders relaxed and elbows by your side.



Adjusting your chair

Your chair should ideally be fully adjustable to accommodate this position. Any time spent with your arms out in front of you unsupported, or with your head in front of your shoulders, will put excessive stress on your spine.

- Adjust the back of your chair so your lower back arch is supported, and your shoulder blades touch the back rest.
- Adjust the seat of your chair so you can put your bottom all the way to the back of the chair and can fit 2 fingers just behind your knee.
- Adjust the height of the chair so your knees are just below your hips and your feet are flat on the floor. Use a foot rest if necessary.
- Your screen should be at arm's length away from you and approximately level with the top of your head.
- You should be able to reach your keyboard and mouse with your elbows approximately 90° by your side.

Tips for healthy working

- Get up and move around often, ideally every half an hour, even briefly.
- Use a headset when taking phone calls and use this as a time to get up from your desk as much as possible.
- Get active at lunch times. Especially if you have been still all morning.
- Warm up thoroughly before doing exercise to undo any tension from sitting in a chair and to wake your muscles up after being still for so long.

Anti-desk exercises

These should be done every day that you spend at your desk and can be used as the start of a warm up before exercise.

Childs Pose

Start on your hands and knees and drop your butt back towards your heels. Stretch your hands out in front of you and keep your neck long



Cat/Camel

On your hands and knees alternate between arching your back up towards the ceiling and stretching it down towards the floor. Make sure your head and your tail bone go in the same direction as each other to complete the curve.



Spine Twist

Lying on your back, arms out to the side and knees bent. Alternate rocking your knees over to the side as far as is comfortable.

Runners Lunge

On one knee, keep your body up tall, tuck your tail bone under and gently take your hips forwards until you feel a stretch in the front of your back leg.



Chest Stretch

Stand in a doorway with a hand on each side of the door frame then slowly step forwards through the door until you feel a stretch across the front of your chest.



Cobra

Lie on your front with your hands either side of your chest. Keep your back relaxed and push through your hands to lift your shoulders off the floor as far as is comfortable. Keep your spine long.



Hold each of these positions for 10 seconds, relax, and repeat. Aim to do each exercise for 2 minutes. They can be done during and/or after your day at your desk.

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