



PROPER & NEUTRAL POSTURE

According to the American Chiropractic Association, posture is the position in which we hold our bodies while standing, sitting, or lying down. Good posture is the correct alignment of body parts supported by the right amount of muscle tension against gravity. Without posture and the muscles that control our position, we would simply fall to the ground.

Good posture helps us stand, walk, sit, and lie in positions that place the least strain on supporting muscles and ligaments during movement and weight-bearing activities. Correct posture:

- Helps us keep bones and joints in correct alignment so that our muscles are used correctly, decreasing abnormal wearing of joint surfaces that could result in degenerative arthritis and joint pain.
- Reduces stress on the ligaments holding the spinal joints together, minimizing the likelihood of injury.
- Allows muscles to work more efficiently, allowing the body to use less energy and, therefore, preventing muscle fatigue.
- Helps prevent muscle strain, overuse disorders, and even back and muscular pain.

Poor posture can lead to excessive strain on our postural muscles and may even cause them to relax, when held in certain positions for long periods of time. For example, people who bend forward at the waist for a prolonged time in the workplace, can develop postural muscles that are more prone to injury and back pain. Several factors contribute to poor posture, most commonly, stress, obesity, pregnancy, weak postural muscles, abnormally tight muscles, and high-heeled shoes. In addition, decreased flexibility, a poor work environment, incorrect working posture, and unhealthy sitting and standing habits can also contribute to poor body positioning.

Posture can be corrected; but remember that long-standing postural problems will typically take longer to address than short-lived ones, as often the joints have adapted to long-standing poor posture. Conscious awareness of posture and knowing what correct posture is, will help make improvements. With much practice, the correct posture for standing, sitting, and lying down will gradually replace old posture habits. This, in turn, will help move toward a better and healthier body position.

How to Sit Properly:

- Keep feet on the floor or on a footrest, if they don't reach the floor.
- Don't cross legs. Ankles should be in front of knees.
- Keep a small gap between the back of knees and the front of seat.
- Knees should be at or below the level of hips.
- Adjust the backrest of chair to support low and mid-back or use a back support.
- Relax shoulders and keep forearms parallel to the ground.
- Avoid sitting in the same position for long periods of time.

How to Stand Properly:

- Bear weight primarily on the balls of feet.
- Keep knees slightly bent.
- Keep feet about shoulder-width apart.
- Let arms hang naturally down the sides of the body.
- Stand straight and tall with shoulders pulled backward.
- Tuck stomach in.
- Keep head level-earlobes should be in line with shoulders. Do not push head forward, backward, or to the side.
- Shift weight from toes to heels, or one foot to the other, if standing for a long time.