

Good Posture Works / Poor Posture Hurts

Poor posture starts as a comfortable habit, but eventually it hurts — not just in your back, but all over. Those aches and pains may even be signs of a serious posture-related problem. So while learning good posture may feel strange at first, you'll be surprised at how quickly it becomes a comfortable habit, and how good it feels and looks. Good posture really does work. And it doesn't cost a dime.



A Backbreaking Habit
 Poor posture does more than just hurt. It can lead to neck pain, shoulder pain, back pain, and even headaches. Over time, poor posture can even lead to chronic pain. So while learning good posture may feel strange at first, you'll be surprised at how quickly it becomes a comfortable habit, and how good it feels and looks. Good posture really does work. And it doesn't cost a dime.

A Posture Plan That Works



Stand straight, posture posture. Feet are hip-width apart, knees are straight, hips are over ankles, and head is over neck.

Good posture in motion. Sit up, pull your shoulders back, and keep your feet flat on the floor.

Proper posture is all strength and flexibility in the muscles that control your spine. You can't have good posture without both.

GOOD POSTURE IN MOTION

Good posture in motion (body mechanics) means maintaining your spine's three curves as their natural alignment. Whether you're standing, sitting, or bending, good posture in motion is the safest, most efficient, and most comfortable way to move. You'll have more energy and less chance of backache, stiffness, or injury.



Standing
 Feet are hip-width apart, knees are straight, hips are over ankles, and head is over neck.



Sitting
 Feet are flat on the floor, knees are at hip level, hips are over ankles, and head is over neck.



Bending
 The straight back bend: keep your back and neck in line as you bend over at the hips. Remember to engage your abdominal muscles to support your lower back.



Carrying
 If you have to reach across a desk, use one hand on the desk to support your lower back. Then do a slight back bend. Try to keep your shoulders down, not hunched over.

The goal of good posture is to maintain the three natural curves of your spine in their normal, balanced alignment. To keep your spine aligned, you need strong, flexible muscles to hold your spine in position. Then, by knowing how to feel in good posture, you'll develop the body awareness that helps you stay in good posture throughout the day, no matter what you're doing.

Your Three Natural Curves

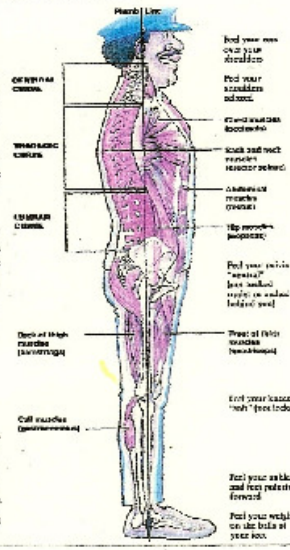
Your spine has three natural curves: the cervical curve of your neck, the thoracic curve of your middle back, and the lumbar curve of your lower back. To maintain your three curves, you must maintain their alignment. Imagine a plumb line level to your head. If your feet, shoulders, pelvis, knees, and ankles line up on the plumb line, your three curves are in their correct positions.

Strong, Flexible Muscles

Strong muscles play a big role in your posture. You need to maintain your spine's three natural curves. Strong muscles hold the bones and joints of your spine in good posture. Flexible muscles won't pull your bones and joints out of line.

How Does It Feel?

You may notice in good posture when you can feel your feet, shoulders, pelvis, knees, and ankles lined up on the plumb line. So when a muscle is tight, you may feel your feet, shoulders, pelvis, knees, and ankles out of line. The more "body aware" you are, the easier it is to find and fix a posture problem.



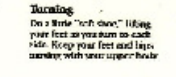
Walking
 "Walk tall." Pull your abdominal muscles in slightly to support your lower back. If your feet, knees, hips, or even back often hurt, you may need to pay more attention to your posture. Correct a muscle or bone alignment problem.



Sitting
 Sit with a lumbar roll supporting your lower back (you can use a rolled-up towel). Then sit up straight, with your shoulders above the back of your chair, so you won't have to slouch.



Sleeping
 The best way to sleep is on your side with a small pillow under your knees, or on your back with a small pillow between your knees. Use only one pillow under your head, and sleep on a firm surface to support your three curves.



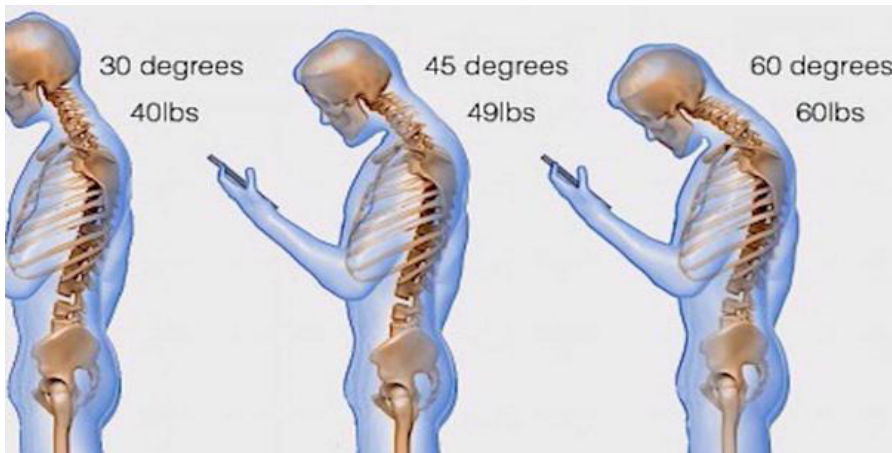
Standing
 Do a little "soft shoe." Lift your feet as you stand to each side. Keep your feet and legs steady, with your upper body.

Your body's neurologic musculoskeletal system works continuously to keep your eyes and ears level. It does this to keep your coordination system, eyes and ears, level. It continually takes in information from your bodies receptors and stimulus from the environment to help you know where you are and what you are doing. It must adapt and turn off some of this information otherwise it would be overloaded. For example your watch band, clothes and rings you no longer feel because your body has adapted to them.

Your body's coordination system has often adapted over time to poor posture and must be re-trained to achieve the correct posture.

A stretch reflex must be achieved to re-train these receptors. So, when you do the Wall Exercise you must perform for over 1 minute period.

Proper posture takes all the stress off the ligaments, discs, and muscles. Letting you re-gain the energy spent as seen on your Surface EMG test on your exam. That means more energy for you.



POSTURE EXERCISES

These posture exercises help you build strength in your spine's three natural curves: the neck, the middle back, and the lower back. They are the best way to correct your posture, too.

Start With Your Spine Aligned

The Wall Test
 It's best to start the exercise with your spine's three natural curves in their normal alignment. Stand with your feet, shoulders, middle back, and head against a wall. One or two books should fit in your armpits every day to support your three curves.

The Mirror Test
 Right after you do the wall test, take a good look at yourself in a full-length mirror. See your shoulders and hips should be level.