

### *Did you know?*

- There are 33 vertebrae in the spinal column.
- There are 4 curves in the human spine: cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral.
- Improper posture can give unintentional non-verbal cues to those around you.
- When you slump, slouch or stoop, your muscles and ligaments struggle to keep you upright, which can lead to headaches, back pain and other issues.

## Proper Posture and Body Mechanics

Proper Posture and body mechanics are techniques you can use to ensure correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity and moveable joints. Consistent use promotes health and well being of the entire body, increases energy and

endurance, and decreases risk of injury. There are many benefits to trying to incorporate proper posture and body mechanics into your daily routine including reducing headaches and neck pain, decreasing strain on muscles in

the neck, back, abdomen, and legs and decreasing wear and tear on joint tissues. Here are a few tips you should keep in mind to keep your posture and body mechanics the best that they can be:

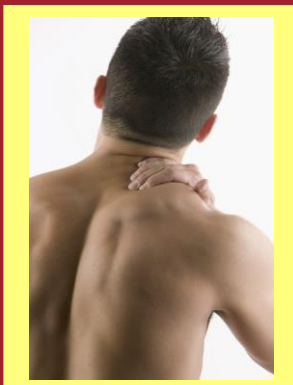
### **Sitting Posture:**

Do not slump. Sit as close to your work as possible. Use a chair that supports your back in a slightly arched position. Sit with your feet flat on the floor or on a foot rest with your knees below your hips (90 degree angle at the knees or slightly more). Do not curl your toes!





*The word posture comes from the Latin verb ponere, which means: "to put or place."*

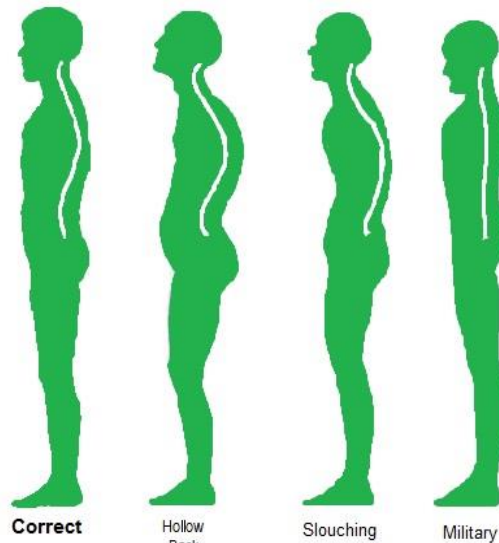


## Standing Posture

Wear comfortable, supportive shoes with non slip soles (no greater than two inch heel). Do not stand in one position for extended periods of time. Try putting one foot up on a small step stool or shelf to change positions, stretching or taking a few steps. Stand in a neutral position with stomach muscles tight.

## Take the Wall Test!

**The Mayo Clinic website offers this test to review your posture:**



Stand with your head, shoulder blades and buttocks touching a wall, and have your heels about 5-10 cm away from the wall. Reach back and slide your hand behind the curve in your lower back, with your palm flat against the wall.

Ideally, you'll feel about one hand's thickness of space between your back and the wall. If there's too much space, tighten your abdominal muscles to flatten the curve in your back. If there's too little space, arch your back so that your hand fits comfortably behind you. Walk away from the wall while maintaining this posture. Keep it up throughout your daily activities.

### Low level activity:

If you are performing an activity that is low to the ground, be careful not to bend or slouch. Consider sitting on a low step stool to bring you closer to the task or kneeling on one leg or both.

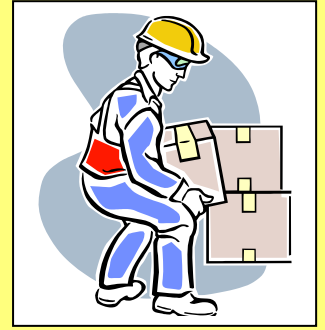
### Upper extremities:

Minimize shoulder extension and above shoulder level work. Use a step ladder to facilitate overhead work. Work with arms close to the body, keeping the wrists neutral. During counter or seated activities, your elbows should be bent at 90 degrees and your shoulders relaxed.

## Lifting:

Lift with two hands and keep the load close to the body. Bend with the knees, not with your back. Keep feet shoulder width apart and staggered. Do not attempt to lift if you feel it may be too heavy, ask

for help. Do not twist when coming up/down from a lift. Never jerk or twist! When carrying items, hold them close to; and in front; of your body.



With proper lifting techniques you can help prevent:

- a rotator cuff tear,
- shoulder impingement,
- back strain/sprain,
- a herniated disk,

...and several other commonly associated problems.

## Avoid fatigue:

When you are fatigued, it is easier to cheat and use positions and movements that seem easier but can lead to damage of tissues or injury or your body. It is important to anticipate fatigue and rest before becoming tired. Try to balance rest with activity. If you

tend to perform many tasks through the day that require standing and you have little opportunity to rest, try to incorporate how some of these activities might be performed from a sitting position, i.e. sitting in a tub to bathe as opposed to standing in the shower

or sitting to apply makeup or prepare vegetables rather than standing at a counter. Try to balance rest with activity through the day. Take your time as rushing increasing tension and fatigue. And always ensure you get enough sleep, 6-8 hours each night.



In summary, excessive bending, slouching, stooping, reaching, and twisting are examples of motions which put stress on your neck, back and extremities. Remember to practice proper lifting techniques and postures to minimize stresses on your body and reduce the risk of an injury. Stay tuned for this series of Be Well emails to learn how you can put these principles to practice when at home, work, driving and exercising!

To contact the  
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