
Back Pain, Posture and Body Mechanics

Back Pain

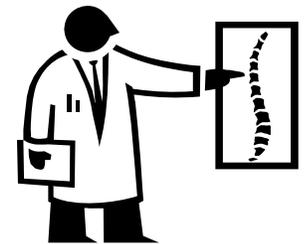
There are many causes for back pain. When you have back pain, you can be more short of breath or tired with activity. It is important to learn the causes of back pain and do what you can to prevent or control it.

Some things that cause back pain or make it worse:

- aging
- medical conditions
- medications
- obesity
- lack of physical activity
- poor posture
- poor body mechanics
- emotional stress

Posture

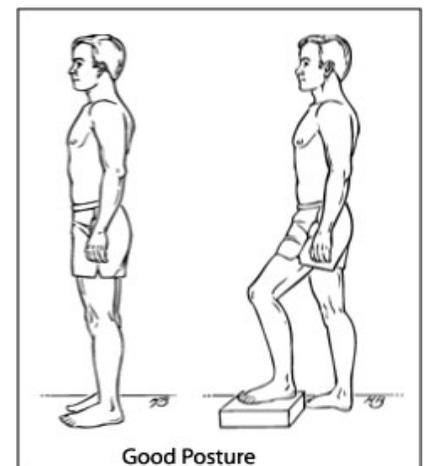
Posture refers to keeping the bones in the back in their natural curves. Normally the backbones are shaped in an 'S' with 3 natural curves.



When you have proper posture, you reduce the risk of back pain. This will help you to breathe better and have more energy.

Standing Posture:

- Stand tall.
- Keep feet shoulder width apart.
- Balance your weight equally on both legs.
- Avoid leaning to one side.
- Rest your arms relaxed at your side.
- Relax your shoulders down, not close to your ears.
- Keep your chin tucked in.

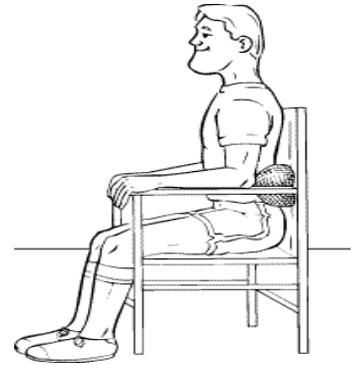


Remember . . .

Ears over shoulders over hips

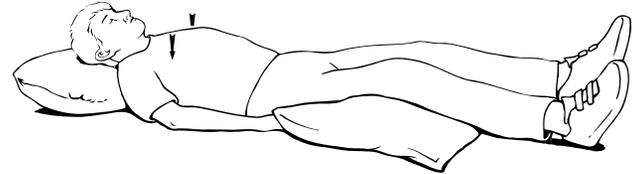
Sitting Posture:

- Keep lower back supported. Using a rolled towel may help.
- Keep feet supported.
- Keep head upright.
- Avoid slouching or slumping while sitting.



Sleeping Posture:

- Support the curves of the spine when both lying on your side and on your back. This reduces the strain on your back.
- Use pillows to support the curves.
- Avoid a mattress that is too soft or too firm.



Remember . . .

- Avoid sitting, standing or lying in one position for too long.
- Change your position every 30 to 45 minutes.
- Stretch after 30 to 45 minutes.

Body Mechanics

What are body mechanics?

Body mechanics means maintaining good posture when moving.

What are the basic guidelines to follow?

- Keep your backbones in line – **Ears over shoulders over hips.**
- Keep a wide base of support – **Feet should be shoulder width apart.**
- Avoid bending and twisting your back.

Tips for better lifting and carrying:

- Bend at the knees rather than your waist.
- Keep your back straight.
- Lift with the larger muscles in your legs.
- Hold objects close to your body.
- Use both arms to carry the weight evenly.
- Keep loads light.
- Make several trips while carrying a light load.

Tips when reaching:

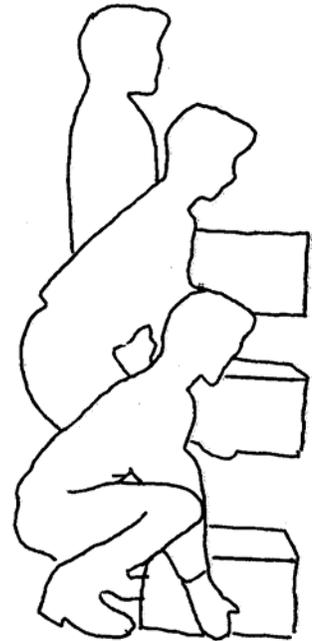
1. Move your body closer to the object you are trying to reach.
2. Avoid reaching distances far from your base of support.
3. Keep regularly used items in easy reach.
4. Avoid bending, twisting and straining to reach.
5. Use a step stool if required.

General tips:

- Know your limits.
- Stop and think about what you need to do.
- Use proper breathing control.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- Take your time.
- Be safe!

Proper Lifting Technique

1. Keep your back straight.
2. Bend your knees rather than bending your back or hips.
3. Keep the load close to your body.
Hug the load.
Use the big muscles in your legs to do the work.



✘ Never lean, twist or bend your body while moving

Remember . . .

Each time you lift . . .

- Use your pursed lip breathing techniques.
- Breathe out as you lift.
- Pace yourself – make several trips.
- Take rest breaks before you need them.

Developed by the Occupational and Physiotherapy Departments
and Educational Services for the
Respiratory Rehabilitation Program ©2007-2010
Some pictures from VHI Exercise Software Respiratory Edition®1999-2005

Body Mechanics and Back Safety



Download from
Dreamstime.com

This watermark and crop image is for previewing purposes only.

ID 35407861

© Cginspiration | Dreamstime.com

Definitions

- ▶ **Posture** is the way we hold the position of our body. Proper posture maintains the natural curve of the spine.
- ▶ **Body mechanics** are the way we move when we perform activities.
- ▶ The **principles of body mechanics** are a set of rules that allow us to maintain proper posture during movement.
- ▶ These principles:
 - ▶ Help protect the back, neck, and shoulders from injury
 - ▶ Are techniques that help maintain proper posture during movement
 - ▶ Are important for caregivers to learn and use

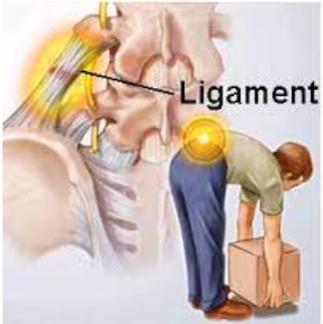
Proper Standing Posture

► Proper standing posture includes:

- Having your head up with your chin in
- Your shoulders are back and relaxed
- Your chest is up with your abdomen pulled in and up
- Your arms are at your sides
- Buttocks are slightly tucked in
- Your knees are unlocked (NOT locked)
- Your feet are flat on the floor and parallel, about 12 inches or shoulder-width apart, with your weight slightly forward



Important Principles for Lifting



- ▶ Create a **strong base of support** by widening your stance. Your feet should be about shoulder-width apart, or about 12 inches.
- ▶ Get as close as possible to the object or person **without leaning forward**.
- ▶ Squat down by bending at the knees and hips, not at your waist. Keep your back straight. Then lift, using your thigh muscles in your legs - **not your back!**



- ▶ **NEVER** twist at the waist when moving an object or person.
- ▶ Instead, **face the direction of the movement**. Take small steps and **turn your entire body** toward the new direction.
- ▶ Don't rush! Hurrying may cause harm to yourself or the client. Take your time and pay attention to details.

Tips to Make Your Job **EASIER!** *...and safeguard your health*

- ▶ Wear comfortable shoes with non-skid soles.
- ▶ Before lifting someone, be sure to **communicate** what you are about to do to avoid surprises or sudden movements.
- ▶ **Lift first in your mind**, then with your body.
- ▶ Be aware of your body's position and posture before lifting.
- ▶ **Avoid reaching for or lifting anything above the head.** Get on the same level as the object or use a reacher.
- ▶ Know your limits! **Ask for help** if the lifting is too heavy.
- ▶ Instead of lifting, you should **slide, roll, or push** the object whenever possible.

