

## Practicing Good Posture

1. Good posture starts with aligning and maintaining the spine's three natural curves: cervical, thoracic and lumbar. To stand correctly, the ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles should all be vertically aligned.
2. Combining good posture with proper body mechanics helps prevent injuries and reduces the onset of painful symptoms resulting from repetitive or continuous movements.
3. To maintain good posture while sitting at a computer, it is important to look straight ahead at the monitor without looking up or down, relax your shoulders and keep your elbows, hips and knees at a 90-degree angle with neutral wrists and feet flat on the floor. Adjust your computer screen, chair, backrest and keyboard position to achieve proper alignment.
4. To maintain proper body alignment when sitting, use a lumbar support for your lower back or a footrest to keep your knees level with your hips. And, since sitting puts more pressure on your back than standing, be sure to shift positions or stand every 30 to 60 minutes.
5. Proper and safe bending involves hinging at the hips and knees, not bending the back. Squatting with feet shoulder width apart is preferable.
6. Carrying objects can significantly affect alignment, especially if weight is unevenly distributed.
7. Pushing is preferable to pulling. If you must pull, use your leg muscles to do the work and keep the load close to your body while maintaining good posture.
8. Maintain good posture while driving by properly adjusting your seat and steering wheel. The best way to get into your car is to back up to the seat, lower yourself to a sitting position and turn your whole body while lifting your legs into the car.
9. It is best to sleep on your side or back. Sleeping on your stomach contributes to poor spine alignment.
10. Stretching tight muscles (without bouncing), strengthening weak muscles (either with or without weights), engaging in cardiovascular conditioning and reducing stress through relaxation techniques will help get you into shape.
11. Physical therapists, who are experts in movement, function and health, can demonstrate proper body mechanics and recommend an individualized stretching, strengthening and cardio exercise and relaxation program for developing and maintaining good posture.