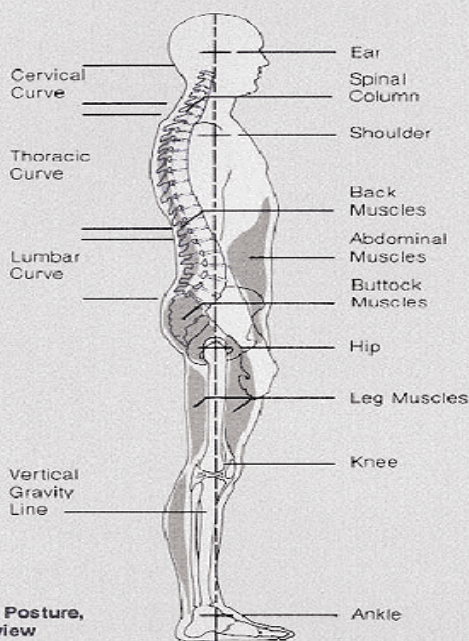


## “Stand up straight! Don’t slouch!”



*Good posture is important because it helps your body function at top speed. It promotes movement efficiency and endurance and contributes to an overall feeling of well-being.*

Good posture is also good prevention. If you have poor posture, your bones are not properly aligned, and your muscles, joints, and ligaments take more strain than nature intended. Faulty posture may cause fatigue, muscular strain, and, in later stages, pain. Many individuals with chronic back pain can trace their problems to years of faulty postural habits. In addition, poor posture can affect the position and function of your vital organs, particularly those in the abdominal region.

### The anatomy of good posture

To have good posture, it is essential that your *back, muscles, and joints* be in tip-top shape.

**Your Back.** A healthy back has three natural curves: a slight forward curve in the neck (cervical curve), a slight backward curve in the upper back (thoracic curve), and a slight forward curve in the low back (lumbar curve). *Good posture* means keeping these three curves in balanced alignment.

**Your Muscles.** Strong and flexible muscles also are essential to good posture. Abdominal, hip, and leg muscles that are weak and inflexible cannot support your back’s natural curves.

**Your Joints.** Hip, knee, and ankle joints balance your back’s natural curves when you move, making it possible to maintain good posture in any position.

### What is good posture?

Good posture—when you are standing—is straight vertical alignment of your body from the top of your head, through your body’s centre, to the bottom of your feet.

From a side view, good posture can be seen as an imaginary vertical line through the ear, shoulder, hip, knee, and ankle. In addition, the three natural curves in your back can be seen.

From a back view, the spine and head are straight, not curved to the right or left. The front view of good posture shows equal heights of shoulders, hips, and knees. The head is held straight, not tilted or turned to one side.

### You can improve your posture

The best way to improve your posture is to *always practice good posture*, when sitting, standing, or moving. Practicing good posture is not always as easy as it sounds, especially for some of us who have forgotten what good posture feels like.

## Tips for maintaining good posture while sitting:

- Sit with your back firmly against your chair; chair should be low enough to allow placement of both feet on the floor with knees slightly higher than hips.
- Keep your head up and avoid leaning forward. If you work long hours at a desk or computer, keep your chair close to the desk to help maintain your upright position.

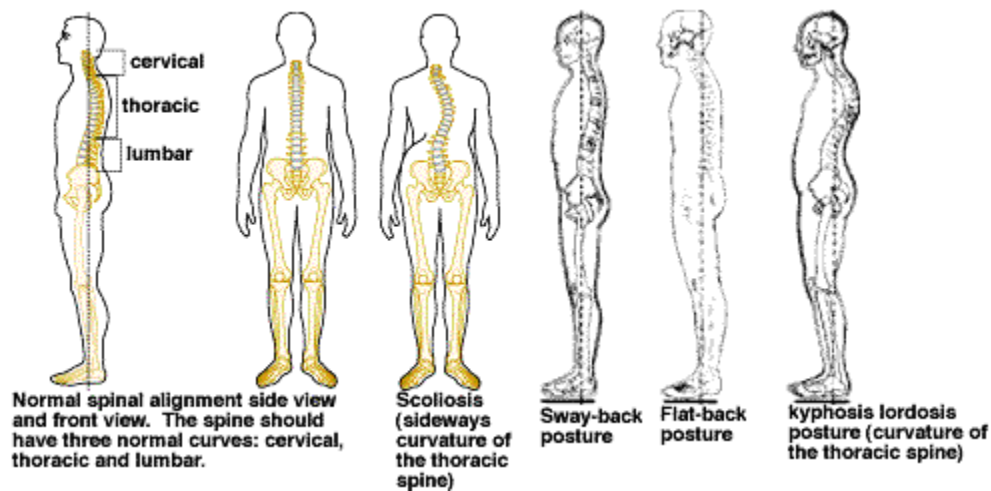
## Good posture for life

Changes occur naturally in your body as you grow older. These changes can influence your posture and make it more difficult to maintain a good posture or correct a poor posture.

## Some of the physical changes that occur:

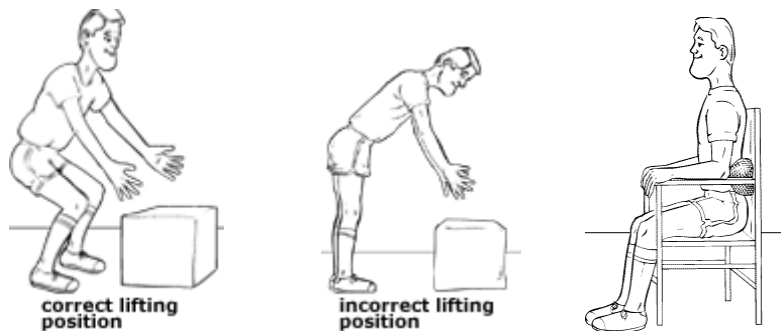
- The shock absorption of the disks between the spinal segments become less and they give in more readily to external forces, such as gravity and body weight.
- Muscles become less flexible.
- Compression and deterioration of the spine, commonly seen in individuals with osteoporosis, cause a more flexed, or bent forward, posture.
- Lifestyles usually become more sedentary and sitting for long periods of time shortens various muscles. This results in the body being pulled into poor postural positions, and stretches and weakens other muscles, which allows the body to slump.

Despite the changes that occur naturally with aging, good posture can be maintained and, for many, poor posture improved. In individuals with severe postural problems, such as poor alignments that have existed so long that structural changes have occurred, the poor posture can be kept from getting progressively worse.



## What contributes to bad posture?

- obesity
- pregnancy
- weak muscles
- high-heeled shoes
- tight muscles; decreased flexibility
- poor work environment, i.e. poor sitting and standing habits



## What physiotherapy can do to help

- We evaluate your posture, checking muscle flexibility, muscle weakness and joint range of movement.
- We give you exercises to correct joint and/or muscle imbalance
- We educate you on correct sitting and standing posture
- We give you ergonomic advice for your workplace.