

---

## Back Pain, Posture and Body Mechanics

---

### Back Pain

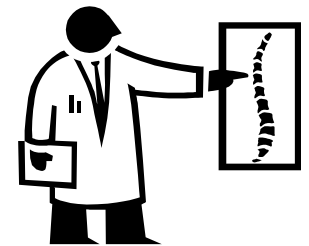
There are many causes for back pain. When you have back pain, you can be more short of breath or tired with activity. It is important to learn the causes of back pain and do what you can to prevent or control it.

### 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

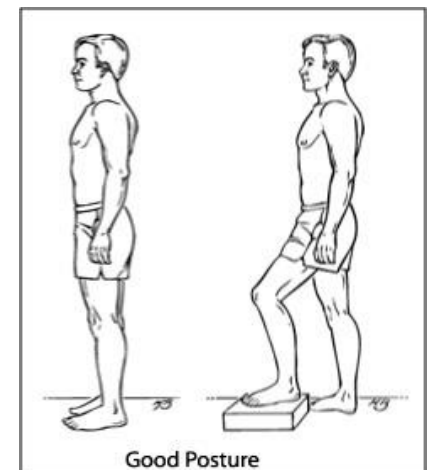
Posture refers to keeping the bones in the back in their natural curves. Normally the backbones are shaped in an 'S' with 3 natural curves.



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.

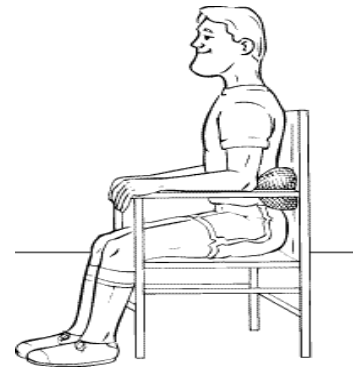


**Remember . . .**

**Ears over shoulders over hips**

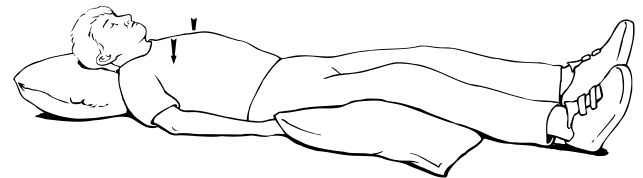
### **Sitting Posture:**

- 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.

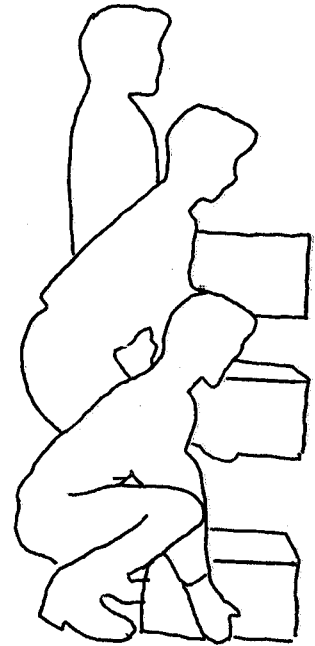
## General tips:

- 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 ©2007-2015  
Some pictures from VHI Exercise Software Respiratory Edition®1999-2005

---