# The Importance of Proper Body Mechanics

Keeping Your Spine Healthy

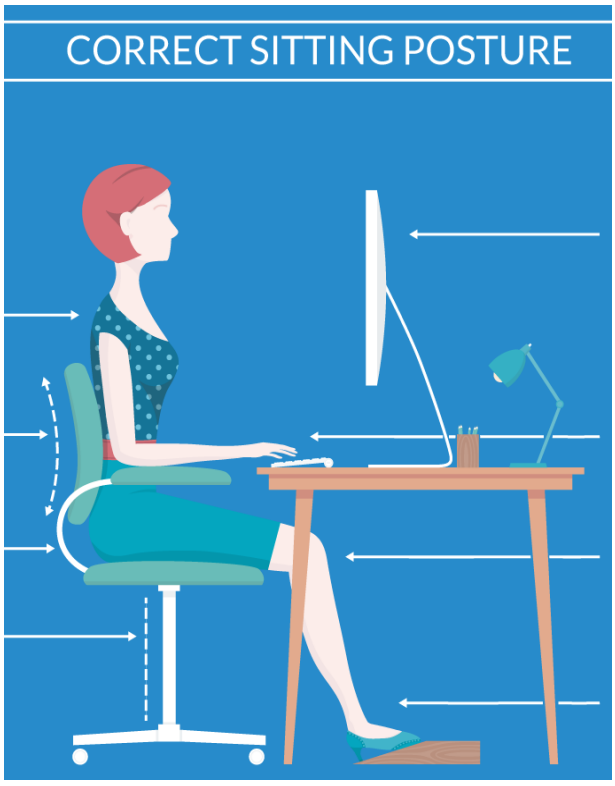
**Body mechanics** is a term used to describe the ways we move as we go about our daily lives. It includes how we hold our bodies when we sit, stand, lift, carry, bend, and sleep. Poor body mechanics are often the cause of back problems. When we don't move correctly and safely, the spine is subjected to abnormal stresses that can lead to injury.

That's why it is so important to learn the basics of proper body mechanics. It is not very complicated and can be easily incorporated into your daily life.

## Computer Workstations

**Many people spend hours at a computer workstation every day. Utilizing proper body mechanics may help decrease back, hip, and neck pain and increase concentration and focus at work.**

- The top of the monitor should be at or below eye level.
- The head and neck should be balanced and in-line with the torso.
- Shoulders should be relaxed and in a neutral position.
- Elbows should be close to the body and supported by some form of armrests. Not too high to make you hunch or too low to make you reach.
- The chair should support the lower back.
- Wrists and hands should be in-line with forearms.
- There should be adequate room for the keyboard and mouse.
- Place your buttocks at the back of the seat while maintaining a small space between the back of your knees and the seat of the chair.
- Feet should remain flat on the floor.

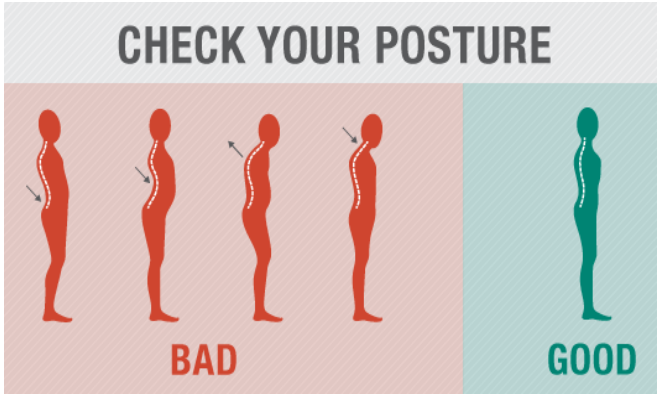



- As with any seated position, people should follow the "90-90-90" rule, which means that the hips are flexed at 90 degrees, knees are flexed at 90 degrees, and ankles are flexed at 90 degrees.

## Standing

**Standing work, including bending, lifting, and carrying can be tough on your back if proper body mechanics are not utilized. Following a few simple guidelines may help minimize the risk of injury to the back.**

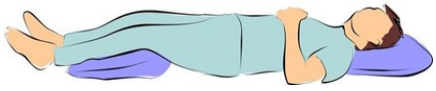
- ➔ Avoid standing in one position for a prolonged period of time. Change positions as often as you can.
- ➔ Check your body posture throughout the day to increase your awareness of how you stand.
- ➔ Pull the shoulders back, lift your chest and stand with your feet apart.
- ➔ Stand on surfaces that are firm and level.
- ➔ If possible, lean on a solid support. This helps decrease fatigue during long periods of standing.




## Sleeping

**The goal when sleeping is to maintain a neutral spine.**

- ➔ Sleep on a firm mattress.
- ➔ Avoid sleeping on your stomach or with your head elevated on an oversized pillow.
- ➔ The side and the back are the best positions for maintaining a neutral position.

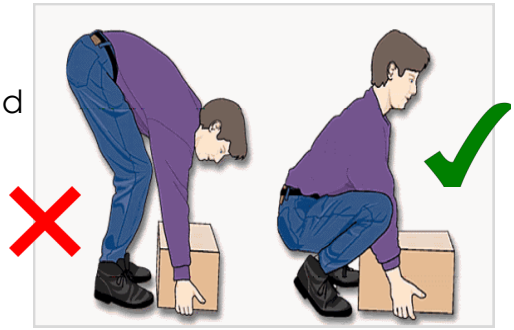


- ➔ Place a pillow between your knees when you sleep on your side or behind your knees when you sleep on your back.
- ➔ Use a pillow that allows you to keep your head aligned with the rest of your body.

## Lifting

**Lifting has the highest risk for back injury. It is more important to know how to lift than how much weight you can lift.**

- ➔ Keep the load immediately in front of you.
- ➔ Bend the knees to a full squat or lunge position instead of bending over at the hips with the back.
- ➔ Bring the load towards the chest.
- ➔ Tighten the lumbar and buttocks muscles to lock the back.



- ➔ Lift from the legs to the standing position.
- ➔ DO NOT: Lift from a twisted/ sideways position OR lift from a forward stooped/ imbalanced position.