



SAFE BACK AND NECK CARE

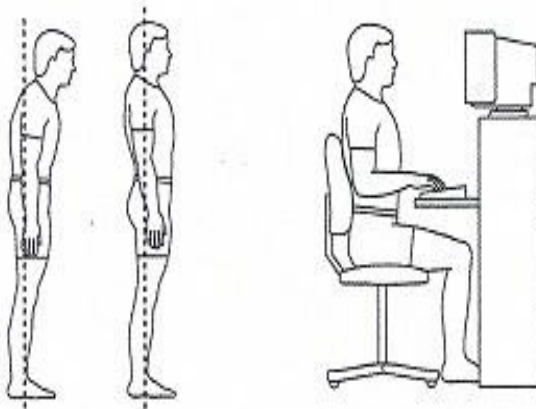
Proper Sitting and Standing Posture

Improper posture can create many types of back pain. The spine has three natural curves: one in the neck, one in the mid back, and one in the low back. It is important to maintain these curves so the body stays “stacked up” properly.

When maintaining improper posture for extended periods, the muscles can become weak and fatigued, resulting in burning or sharp pain, headaches, as well as muscle spasm. Some muscle groups become over extended while other muscle groups become shortened. The ligaments (tough cord-like tissues that provide stability for the spine) also can become irritated with improper posture, resulting in back aches and stiffness. This abnormal posture condition is called postural dysfunction.

Postural dysfunction and its symptoms can generally be resolved with proper treatment. Therapeutic exercise is used to stretch the short muscles and provide strengthening and endurance to the weak muscles. Instruction is provided on proper posture and how to avoid further episodes of pain. Other forms of treatment may be used along with exercise and education. These “modalities,” such as moist heat, electrical stimulation, ultrasound, and deep tissue massage, help to relieve the symptoms until the muscle imbalances can be corrected.

Following are examples of proper and improper posture. You should try to attain proper posture as often as possible during your day. At first your muscles will not have the endurance to keep your posture correct all day, but as you begin using proper posture more frequently it will become easier. You will find your pain and spasms begin to diminish.





Is your computer or desk station set up so that you have good posture, and that you are not always twisting in one direction repeatedly? If not, examine the diagram below to make sure the chair and desk station is set up correctly. Be sure there is proper lighting.



- Hips and knees should be at 90 degrees, feet flat on floor/footrest.
- Shoulders should be relaxed (not elevated) and elbows should be held at 90 degrees.
- Monitor should be at eye level.
- Keyboard should be positioned so wrists are not bent up or down or twisted.
- A lumbar roll or support should be used to provide low-back support.
- If you do other types of deskwork, tilt the work up instead of lowering head and neck.

If you have any questions, consult your doctor or health professional.