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Mind your ABCs:

Abdominals

Keep abdominals strong and engaged.

Buttock Muscles

Make sure you use them to help you move.

Chest

Keep your chest up, lengthened, and stand tall.



Check with your doctor before embarking on any new exercise program.

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Perfecting Your Posture

Good posture impacts your appearance as well as your overall health by relieving strain and fatigue from your muscles and ligaments. Poor posture, on the other hand, increases your risk of injury and pain.

We start with straight posture when we are young and it declines as we age. According to HSS Physical Therapist Dana Aaron, DPT, over the years our bones get progressively weaker, our muscles become less flexible and we heal slower. Our spinal discs shrink in height, giving us a shorter, more hunched appearance.

Gravity constantly pushes down on us, forcing us forward over time. We also find ourselves in seated positions more often than we should. Whether we are commuting in the car or sitting at our desks, we frequently lean forward, especially when looking down at our phones or tablets.



What can we do?

Exercise

Exercises that target the upper body, lower body, and core muscles are recommended. Aim to “strengthen and lengthen”. Strengthen the muscles that are overstretched (i.e., upper back, abdominal, and buttock muscles) and lengthen the muscles that are shortened and tight (i.e., chest and hip flexors). Specific muscles differ for everyone, so speak with your health professional to learn which exercises work best for your individual condition.

Sleep Alignment

Good posture is attainable even while you sleep. When sleeping on your side, place a firm pillow under your head and another between your knees to keep alignment and relieve pressure from the back and hips. When sleeping on your back, flex your knees slightly and place a pillow underneath your knees.

Daily Changes

- While sitting for long periods at your desk or in a plane, set an alarm to stand every hour for a chance to readjust the pressure on your spine.
- When sitting, use a footstool to keep your feet firmly planted and place a small, rolled towel at your mid-back to help you sit upright.
- As you stand waiting to cross the street, distribute your weight equally between both feet. Activate your muscles and slightly bend your knees, as locked knees put extra stress on your bones.
- When walking around, carry a light and even load, by holding packages in two hands or in a backpack strapped on both shoulders. Make sure to have canes or other assistive devices properly sized to meet your proper posture.
- When driving, set your mirror while sitting with proper posture. Once you can no longer see, you know you must sit back up.