

## Protecting Your Back

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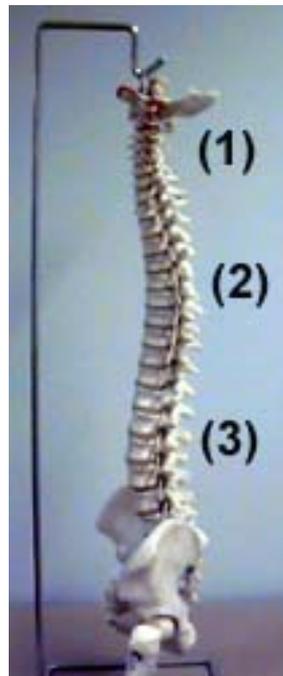
Creating and maintaining good posture decreases your risk of developing back problems. Achieving comfortable, good posture will provide a functional range of movement that will allow you to perform daily activities safely.

Even if your back feels OK at the movement, you may be straining it if you:

1. Have poor posture.
2. Move your body incorrectly.
3. Are out of shape or overweight.

All of these strains add up until one day a simple act like bending over can bring on back pain. When correctly aligned the back has three curves. It curves in (forward) at your neck (1), out in the chest region (2), and in again in the lower back (3). These curves help distribute pressure evenly throughout the vertebrae and discs.

Body mechanics is defined as the way in which you move your body and back. Good body mechanics includes lifting loads close to your body to reduce strain on your back and maintaining your three natural curves to keep your back in balance.



## Keys to Proper Lifting

1. Stand close to the object to be lifted.
2. Spread your feet wide apart to straddle the object.
3. Squat, bending your knees and hips, keeping your back in proper alignment.
4. Contract your stomach muscles.
5. Lift by using the work of your leg muscles, not your back.
6. When lifting with another person, one person should say when to lift, walk and unload.
7. Do not twist as you lift. Instead, pivot with your hips and shoulders in line and shift your weight.
8. Mentally prepare, by planning what you are going to do.



## Keys to Pushing and Pulling Objects

1. Push, don't pull, whenever possible.
2. Stay close to the object.
3. Do not lean forward.
4. Use both arms and tighten your stomach muscles.
5. Never push or pull with a bent back.

## Keys to Prolonged Standing

1. Change position often.
2. Wear comfortable shoes and stand on a soft surface.
3. Bring your work to a comfortable level, do not bend over it.
4. Rest one leg on a stool to reduce stress on the back.



## Keys to Sitting

1. Sit in a chair that supports your lower back. If the chair does not support your back sufficiently, you can place a lumbar cushion (which can be bought at your local pharmacy) at the level of your low back, for added support.
2. Position your chair so that your knees are at least as high as your hips when your feet are flat on the floor.
3. Your desktop should be slightly above your waist.
4. Sit close to your work, do not lean over it.
5. Do not slump over while sitting.
6. Take frequent breaks to get up and stretch.



## Keys to Bending and Leaning

1. Let your legs do the work.
2. Stand with your feet shoulder length apart, one foot ahead of the other.
3. Contract your stomach muscles.
4. To lower you upper body, bend with your knees and hips, keeping your back in proper alignment. Rest one knee on the floor for extra support if needed.



## Keys to Doing Repetitive Movements

1. Keep loads small if possible.
2. Tighten your stomach muscles before lifting.
3. Change positions frequently.
4. Turn your entire body by taking little steps or pivoting, do not twist.

## Summary of Good Posture

1. Keep proper spinal alignment
2. Bend knees
3. Keep stomach muscles tight
4. Use larger muscle groups
5. Keep loads close to the body
6. Maintain stability and balance throughout
7. Mentally prepare and plan before lifting
8. Avoid twisting