

VITRA Health

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Good Body Mechanics



Anytime your body is not in a straight line (alignment), you are putting strain on your back. By keeping your body in good alignment and by using good body mechanics, you can help decrease the stress on your back.

Here are tips for good body mechanics in various situations:

Sitting

- Your feet should be able to touch the floor.
- Your knees and hips should be level.
- Sit up tall, and do not bend your head forward.
- Use a low back support in your chair.
- It is best to have armrests to lay your arms on. Make sure your work is straight in front.
- Do not remain in one position for too long.
- Get up and stretch often.

Standing

- Always stand close to the job that you are doing.
- Avoid standing for a long time. If you must stand for a long time, place one foot up on a small stool.

Walking

- Walk with good posture. Keep your head high, your chin tucked in, and your back straight.
- Avoid high heels if you are going to be on your feet for a long time. High heels place the strain on your lower back.
- Push objects rather than pull them. Put one foot in front of the other, bend at your hips and knees and walk forward. Pulling places strain on your lower back.

Lifting

- Tighten your stomach muscles when you lift.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects. If something is more than half your body weight, get help or use equipment.
- When lifting, bend your knees not your waist. Keep your back straight.
- Do not twist your back as you lift. To turn when lifting, pivot your feet.
- Do not lift an object above waist level. This increases the arch in your back.

- Keep objects close to your center of gravity (belly button) when you are lifting or carrying things.
- Avoid reaching for objects.
Do not:
 - Reach across a table to grasp an object
 - Reach across to make a bed
 - Lean over to open a window
 - Bend over to get an object out of the trunk of a car

Driving

- Make sure that your hips and knees are level.
- Do not lean back and drive with outstretched arms.
- Place a lumbar support or a rolled-up towel behind your lower back to provide support.
- When you are on car trips that last over one hour, stop every hour to walk and stretch.

Sleeping:

- The best positions for sleeping are: on your back with a pillow under your knees, or on your side.
- Do not sleep on your stomach, on a soft, sagging mattress or on cushions that do not give you support.

Source: The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center