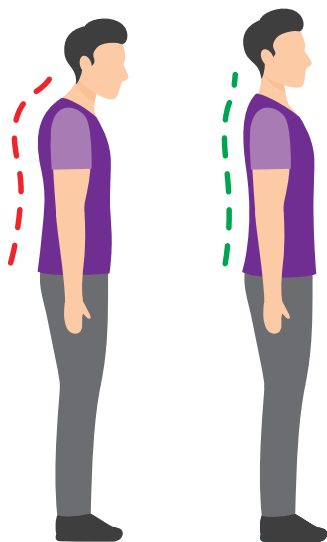


# Muscle matters: Straighten up for better health

**For most of us, activities like standing, sitting and lifting heavy objects come as naturally as breathing. After age 2 or so, we rarely think about exactly how we do those things. But we probably should, because we often do them incorrectly.**<sup>16,17</sup>

Your posture—the way you hold your body—affects everything from your spine and muscles to your sense of balance and even your digestion. Good posture prevents pain and injury, while bad posture can contribute to a host of health problems.



## Static posture

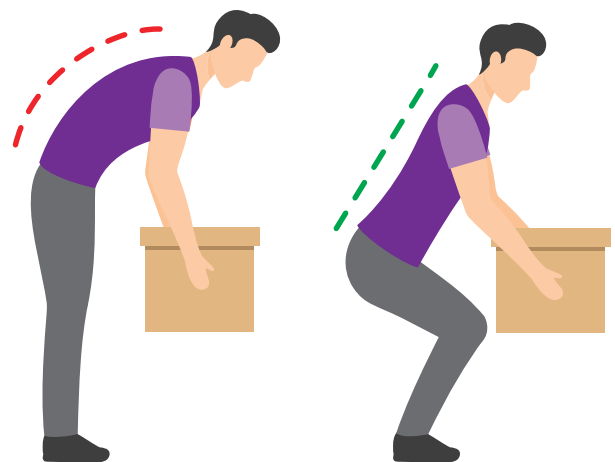
Your static posture is how you hold your body when you're not moving, which includes sitting, standing and lying down.

## Putting the good in posture

What is good posture? Simply put, it means holding your body in a neutral position, one that supports your spine's natural curvature and reduces impact on your joints.

You can feel the difference between good and bad posture by standing up straight for a few minutes and then leaning for another few minutes.

Both static posture and dynamic posture are important. In fact, posture is always important.



## Dynamic posture

Your dynamic posture is how you hold your body when you're active, which includes lifting heavy objects, exercising and playing a sport.

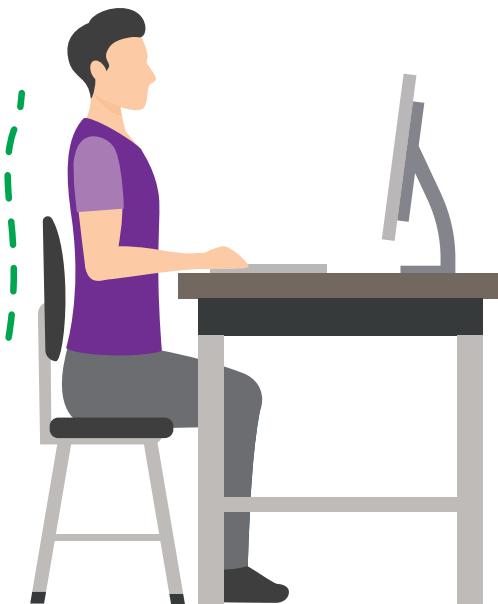
<sup>16</sup> <https://acatoday.org/content/posture-power-how-to-correct-your-body-alignment>  
<sup>17</sup> <https://medlineplus.gov/guidetogoodposture.html>

# How to maintain good posture<sup>18,19,20</sup>

## Standing<sup>21</sup>

Standing for long periods of time can contribute to muscle fatigue and low back pain, as well as other musculoskeletal disorders. You can lessen the impact by standing properly.

- Hold your **head** high and level.
- Your **ears** should be directly above your shoulders.
- Keep your **shoulders** back.
- Pull your **stomach** in.
- Stand tall with your **legs** straight.
- Keep your **knees** slightly bent.
- Your **feet** should be shoulder-width apart.
- Put most of your weight on the balls of your **feet**.



## Sitting<sup>22</sup>

Sitting for too long is so detrimental that many experts talk about “sitting disease.” You should replace some of that sitting with physical activity. When you have to sit, always use good posture.

- If you're using a computer, the top of the screen should be at **eye** level.
- Your **upper back** and **shoulders** should not hunch forward.
- If you're using a computer, your **elbows** should be held at a 90-degree angle close to your body.
- Use a chair that supports your **spine's** natural curvature.
- Your **hips** should be as far back as possible.
- Your **feet** should be flat on the floor.

18 <https://medlineplus.gov/guidetogoodposture.html>

19 <https://chiropractic-uk.co.uk/straighten-up-uk/>

20 <https://acatoday.org/content/posture-power-how-to-correct-your-body-alignment>

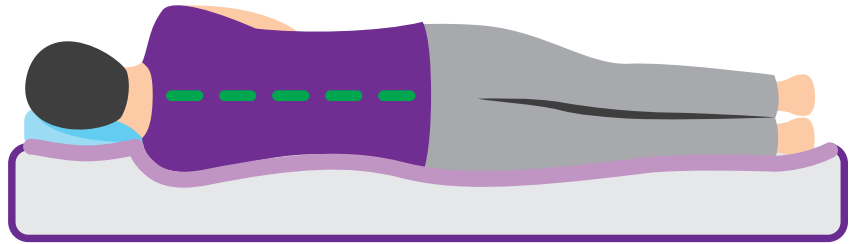
21 <https://www.webmd.com/back-pain/news/20150728/standing-all-day-at-work-it-may-take-toll-on-health#1>

22 <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/sitting-disease-how-a-sedentary-lifestyle-affects-heart-health>

## Lying Down<sup>23</sup>

Good posture is even important when you're asleep. Since you should be sleeping 7-8 hours per night, that makes sense.

- Sleep on your **back** or side, not on your stomach.
- If you sleep on your **back**, place a small pillow under your **knees**.
- If you sleep on your side, put a firm pillow between your **knees**.
- Use a pillow that keeps your **spine** in alignment.
- Keep your **ears, shoulders** and **hips** in line, both when you sleeping and when you turn over.
- A firm mattress is usually the best option, but choose the mattress that works for you.



Any posture can be harmful if you hold it too long. If you must stand for long periods, use a foot rest and shift your weight between legs. Don't sit at the computer for more than 40 minutes at a time. Sleep in a different position each night.<sup>24,25,26</sup>

You don't have to be a bodybuilder for your muscles to matter. Healthy muscles help prevent or minimise a wide range of physical and mental health conditions. At our Musculoskeletal health resources hub, you can find the flyers and articles offering easy-to-action lifestyle changes to help you build muscle strength and prevent and manage musculoskeletal problems, including low back pain.

Also, Aetna International members can access the Health Hub—register if you haven't already—to quickly find

self-help tools, professional services, member offers, and to submit and track claims and more. Within the Health Hub, you can learn more about the Kaia app, which provides curated, customised guidance from pain-treatment experts, and ClassPass, which offers virtual fitness classes.

For more information about your health care benefits, contact your plan sponsor or one of Aetna International's expert sales consultants for group business or individuals and families.

## Straighten up. Stretch out. Stay strong.

### Musculoskeletal support resources:

<https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/musculoskeletal-health-support-resource.html>

**Health Hub:** <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/encyclopedia/content.aspx?ContentTypeID=1&ContentID=4460>

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing\\_basic.html](https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing_basic.html)

<sup>25</sup> <https://chiropractic-uk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mind-Your-posture-computer-sense.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.pinterest.com/pin/AcXmf3s50Zem7uO3PFTNOcQyNbBjtgaQUa0AP2EOU\\_CsrC5N2xyTHBY/](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/AcXmf3s50Zem7uO3PFTNOcQyNbBjtgaQUa0AP2EOU_CsrC5N2xyTHBY/)