

jazzercise

Sitting with a Neutral Spine

Throw in the Towel!

The common towel may be a vital piece of exercise equipment.

While sitting, a rolled up towel can help position the body into "neutral spine" when it normally cannot attain or sustain it.



DON'T

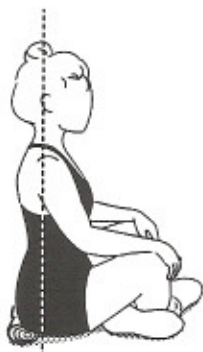
The Tendency When sitting, the lower back automatically rounds and loses its natural curve. This is not a good thing since the goal of the neutral spine position is maintenance of the spine's natural curves in all positions.

Consequences The postural muscles are unable to hold your spine correctly. You are now "hanging on the ligaments" to hold you upright.

Problem Trying to "lift the sternum" won't solve the problem.

Solution Change the positioning of the pelvis. Just like when standing, correct pelvis placement is the foundation of a neutral spine.

Another Problem Many of us lack the flexibility and/or the body awareness to "sit up straight" and position the pelvis in neutral while sitting.



DO

Another Solution

Use a towel! Roll the towel and place it under the glutes. Now, shift your pelvis forward so your ischial tuberosities ("sit down bones") slide off the front of the towel. As Physical Therapist Deborah Ellison likes to say, "let the bones slide off while the meat stays on." You've now positioned your pelvis in neutral, can "lift through the sternum" and maintain the spine properly.

Hoops, Bells & Whistles

Only when the pelvis starts in neutral can you stretch or strength train correctly in any seated position.

Tips

- When first getting a feel for “letting the bones slide off while the meat stays on,” try sliding the ischials off the edge of a hard chair or a step. You’ll probably feel it more easily than with a soft, squishy towel.
- One towel may not be enough. Depending on the flexibility in and around the hip sockets, you may need two towels to create a thicker roll.
- To help you feel pelvis positioning while in a seated position,, sit near the edge of a sturdy chair, feet flat on the floor. Round your back to the edge of your range of motion without leaning forward or looking down. Next, arch to the edge of your range of motion without leaning back or looking up. (Do this a few times.) Hold the arched position a moment, then release only about 10%. This is neutral.
- Attempt to maintain a healthy back by sitting with a neutral spine throughout the day. You can use the towel trick when ever sitting without a back support - such as on bleachers.