

jazzercise

Stabilizing the Torso

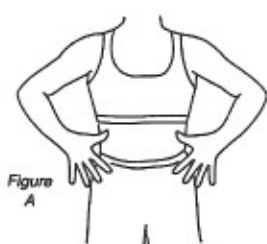


Figure A

We know by now that a neutral spinal alignment is the posture that minimizes stress on the spine and soft tissues. This is the safest alignment for standing, sitting, lifting and... of course, Jazzercising.

It's fairly simple to find a neutral spine when standing still during a technique class, but how can you tell if you're "doing the neutral spine thing" while performing flick-kicks or grand plies with a hip release?

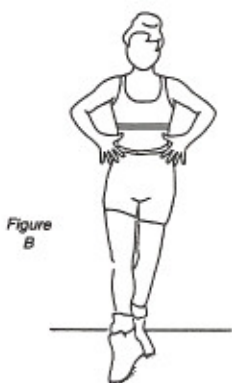


Figure B

Here's a tip. Let's call it a "Jazz Hand Touch Test."

- Stand with your right middle finger on your right hip bone. Place your right thumb on the base of your right ribcage. Repeat on the left side. (Figure A)
- Keep your hands in place and feel your pelvis in neutral position.
- Memorize the distance between your thumb and middle finger. Feel the position of your pelvis and ribs. Now the fun begins!

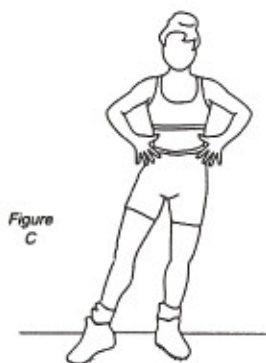


Figure C

Experiment with pointing one leg to the front, the side, then behind. (Figures B, C, D) Keep your torso absolutely still and move only the leg in the hip socket.

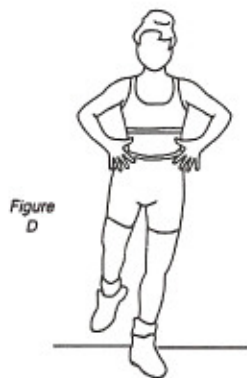


Figure D

The ribs and hip bones should stay in the same place without moving closer together or further apart. The hips should not rotate in relation to the ribs or the ribs in relation to the hips.

It's pretty tough to do correctly. The range of motion is probably smaller than what you are used to, but when executed properly the movements force you to use more muscle fiber of the targeted muscles and prevent injuries by reducing spinal stress.

Figure E

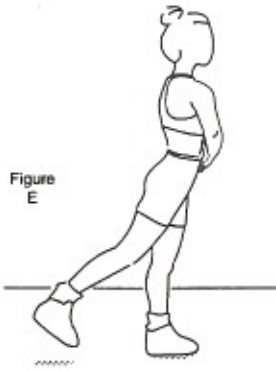
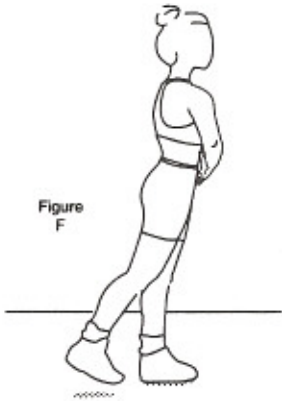


Figure E shows a typical leg extension in which the pelvis releases undesirably. Try this using the Jazz Hand Touch Test and you'll feel your fingers move further apart. The leg range of motion looks larger, but in actuality the pelvis has released.

The better form, shown in Figure F, has the pelvis stable with the movement isolated to the glutes and leg.

Speaking of pelvis stabilization... which muscles are you training when you make the pelvis stabilize the skeletal system? The abdominals! Other muscles are working too, but this is fabulous endurance training for the abs. It trains them as "pelvis stabilizers" making them perform the way you want them to every day of your life.

Figure F



Practice the Jazz Hand Touch Test when performing a variety of movements. See if you are maintaining a neutral spine during:

- Lunge/plies in fourth position.
- Static lunges with the torso forward for bent over rows.
- Grand plie with a hip release.
- Flick-kicks to first position and second position.
- Standing leg abduction (in second) and extension (behind). Then, try it with the tube.