

jazzercise

The "Neutral Spine"

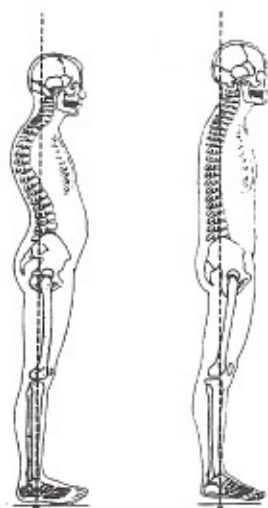
Keeping the spine in its natural curves is your best bet to avoid back pain. This correct alignment affords minimal wear and tear on the postural joints, as well as a balance between the postural muscles and ligaments.

"Proper" alignment will vary somewhat with each person, since every body is different. Think of the anatomical landmarks as having a "range" rather than exact pinpoints where someone has "poor" posture.



DO

- Imagine a plumbline along your side.
- The ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle line up
- Notice how the plumbline passes through the center of the lumbar vertebrae, as well as the center of the hip, knee, and ankle. This alignment minimizes undesirable stress on the joints.
- Maintain a slight inward curve at the neck and the lower back.



DON'T

- With poor postural habits, notice how the plumbline passes through areas of the body which were not designed to bear the weight of the body. Wear and tear occurs rapidly.
- The ligaments of the weight bearing joints have to maintain upright posture, rather than muscles. Eventually, ligaments can become over stretched.

DON'T



- Round your shoulders or slouch forward. "Rounded Shoulders" is really a misnomer, since it affects the whole body. You can see the muscles which are affected by this simple act of slouching (below).
- Rounding the shoulders creates a negative chain reaction with hyperextension of the head; lack of support for the shoulder girdle and ribcage; depression of the chest which causes the diaphragm to lower, which in turn affects breathing; inward rotation of the shoulder joints; shortening of the muscles on the front of the chest while the muscles on the upper back are elongated. The list could go on.



Poor postural habits affect the whole body. (Is it any wonder why so many people have back pain?) Add to that scenario the accelerated paces of exercise and problems in the muscles, ligaments and joints may be exacerbated.

Truly one of the best gifts you can give yourself is a neutral spine on a daily basis. Your muscles can work their best, you'll look better, breathe better and your body will thank you in the long run.