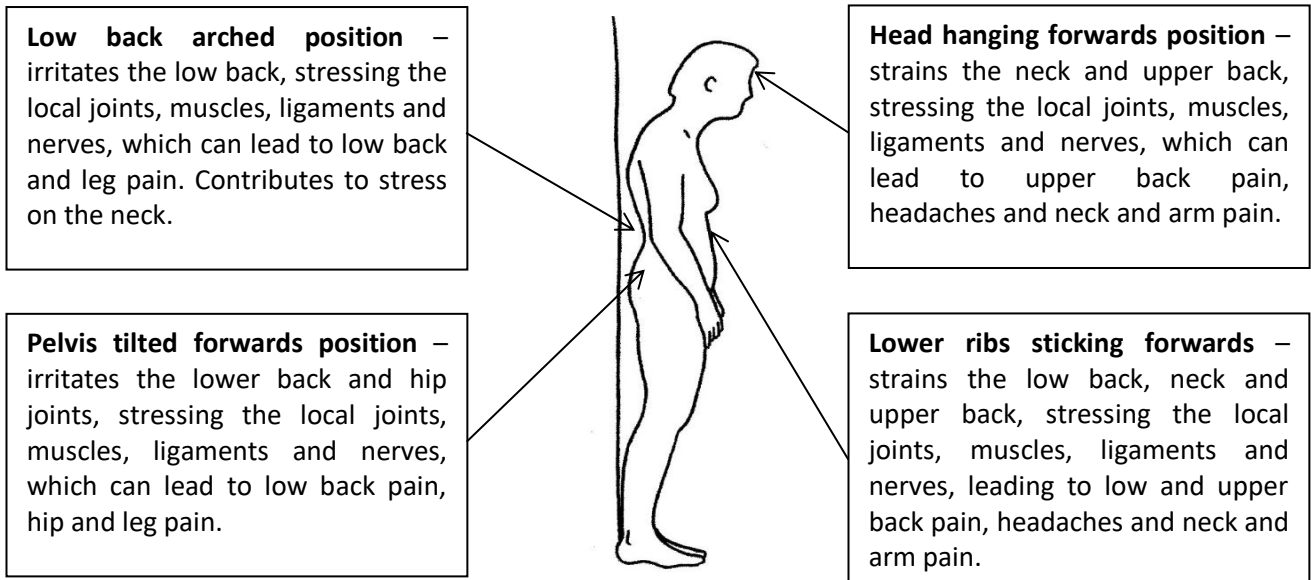


# Is Your Posture Breaking Your Back?

## Wall based exercise to help improve the strength of your postural muscles

If you have been suffering from aches and pains related to tight joints and muscles, or other irritated soft tissues, then probably some of the problem is related to your posture being out of balance.



When you have sat for prolonged periods or not exercised much, some muscles in your body have a natural tendency to switch off - they tend to lengthen and weaken. These muscles are your buttock muscles, abdominals, lower shoulder blade and front neck muscles. The opposite muscles to these tighten. This exercise is designed to help rebalance your muscles, to help you stand straighter more easily and reduce your risk of pain.

- Please follow the instructions as closely as you can but it is important to avoid pain or overly stressing yourself. The aim is to help you improve!
- With knees slightly bent, aim to place your heels, buttocks and upper back against a wall. Turn your arms outwards, so your palms face forwards and get as much of the backs of your arms as you can in contact with the wall. Keep the inner arches of your feet high. If it is not too stressful on your legs or elsewhere, try and keep your feet and knees facing forwards or a little turned out.
- If you can, place your head against the wall too. If you have got to bend your head backwards to touch / reach the wall with your head, allow the head to remain off the wall. Perhaps use a suitably sized firm foam block or cushion behind you head.
- Ideally you are aiming for a position that if someone dropped a plumb line through the top of your head and someone looked at you from your side, the plumb line would pass through the top of your head, ear, base of neck,



shoulder, outer hip and ankle.

- Try and get as much of your spine in contact with the wall. Do this by flattening the small of your back against the wall by tucking your tail bone in between your legs, pulling your lower ribs in towards the wall and tucking your chin in.
- Check the back is flat by trying to slide your hand into the small of the back. If you can push your fingers up to your knuckles in, your low back is too arched. If you are struggling to flatten your back any further, you should try moving your heels an inch or two further out from the wall.
- Push the shoulders down and back, by trying to open up across the fronts of your shoulders and squeeze your shoulder blades together at the back and try and move them down towards your buttocks.
- In time with your natural breath, inhale slowly and as deeply as possible through the nose and fill the abdomen with air, push the stomach out, increase the arch in your back by rotating your pelvis as if you were trying to point your buttock muscles towards the ceiling.
- Slowly exhale through a relaxed mouth (relax entire face) emptying and flattening the abdominals (pull your belly button inwards towards your spine), rotating your pelvis so your tail bone tucks in between your legs (buttocks point towards the floor). Exhale as much air as possible. Bring the belly in as much as possible. Your stomach and buttock muscles should now be firmly contracted. And repeat. Aim to do this for 30-60 times pain free 3-4 times a day.

## Progression

1. Basic: As you are exhaling bring the arms up so they are at right angles to your shoulder, your elbows are bent to 90 degrees and you are attempting to touch the back of your shoulders, elbows, forearms and hands against the wall. Remember to keep the chin tucked in slightly. Try and hold for as long as it is pain free – up to 30 seconds. Relax and inhale
2. Intermediate: Once you are confident in this position, bend your knees so your body sinks. Basically you are attempting to do a small squat. Do not let your heels rise. As you move down, keep your spine and head in a constant position relative to the wall. Straighten your legs and repeat. Do as many as you can without pain. Then do 2-4 sets of half that amount, with a minute break in between, 2-4 times a day for 2 weeks. After 2 weeks recalculate your pain free maximum and alter your reps accordingly. Repeat.
3. Advanced: when you are getting very strong and your back is in great condition, you can start working through these exercises, one leg at a time. Be careful. Remember to exercise at half your maximum. Follow the progression recommendations outlined in section 2.



These exercises can help to strengthen your core muscles, stabilise your spine and help reduce the chance that you will be vulnerable to aches and pains.



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