Ergonomics

Please perform these tasks with any limitations you need, perform them within your abilities, and always keep your medical history in mind.

Conduct your own Posture Scan

A Posture Scan is the way to measure your neutral posture. This scan helps you decide how your body feels in that position—it's especially important to perform this scan during your workday to see how your body is feeling. A neutral posture allows our bodies to be in the best position with less forces and more opportunity for our muscles, joints, blood vessels, and nerves to be in good positions.

Standing Posture Scan

1. Find yourself a flat piece of wall, hopefully not with any trim like around a door frame and place your back against the wall.

2. Bring your heels about two to four inches away from the wall.

3. Notice what you feel. Ideally, you should have gentle pressure at your hips, at your shoulders, and at your head. Does it feel like you need to bring something away from or towards the wall?

4. Consider how it feels when you perform that movement? What does it feel like for you to bring that part of your body away or back towards the wall? By performing gentle pressure, does it feel good, does it feel weird?

5. Next, using your hand and going at your low back (or at the small of your back), can you fit your hand through? You should be able to with maybe a little bit of snugness.

   a. Have a lot of room? Gently tilting your hips backwards to see how it feels.

   b. Don't have enough room? Gently tilt your hips forward to see how it feels.

6. This is what neutral posture feels like when standing.

Seated Posture Scan

1. Sit as you normally would in a chair and get comfortable.

2. Imagine that you have a rope attached to the top of your head and that rope is gently pulling you up towards the ceiling, so you're sitting nice and tall.

3. Move your neck forward and backward, not necessarily tilting your nose up and down, but just forward and backward until you find the place of most comfort in your neck.

4. Then, notice your body. Is the chair supporting your back? Do you feel equal pressure on your hips and on your thighs? Do you feel like you are leaning to one side or the other? Are your feet firm and flat on the ground?

5. View the different ways where we can be in more optimal posture when we're sitting and ways where we can maybe have some improvements.

Set up your workspace to work for you

We're going to build upon what you learned from your Posture Scan and the insight you gained on how your body is feeling. If you need support for this next part, see if you can have a second person observing your posture. Alternatively, put a mirror next to you so you can see yourself.

Adjusting your chair

1. The first picture (below) demonstrates an ideal posture. Note how the seated woman's head, shoulders, and hips are aligned. Her legs are supported, her knees are slightly lower than her hips, and her feet are on the ground.

2. The pictures in the middle and on the left show adjustments you can make.

    a. Have an adjustable office chair? Use the built-in features to adjust the height of the chair to help you find your ideal position.

    b. Consider placing a pillow, blanket, or towel behind yourself or underneath to support your back or help raise you up.

    c. Consider placing books, boxes, crates, or aerobics block on the ground to support your feet.

    d. Get creative to find ways to adjust your seat to work for you. Find objects to help your body feel comfortable that won't shift on you.

Adjust your monitor or laptop

3. When seated in your ideal posture, your laptop or monitor should be straight ahead. So, if you close your eyes, get you're your ideal posture, then you open your eyes, you should be gazing at the top third of your screen.

    a. Need to raise your monitor or laptop? Add sturdy objects (like boxes, reams of paper, or books) underneath your monitor or laptop.

b. For a distance, it should be about an arm's length away.

c. Consider adjusting your zoom on your computer to improve readability.

4. If you have two monitors, it's ideal to place them side-by-side and be the same height. Then, have them rotated inwards about 30 degrees for optimal viewing and the best position for your neck.

a. If you only use occasionally, it's better to have one in front of you and the second monitor off to the side.

5. If you've raised your laptop up, you'll need to use an external, separate keyboard and mouse to keep the screen at the optimal height.

6. If you were bifocals or trifocals, note that your monitors are going to be lower to accommodate for those glasses.

Consider your elbow positions

7. Elbows should be at about 90 degrees, and at a neutral position (not too high, not too low, not going side-to-side). This is where the finetuning comes in. You might need to adjust your chair or laptop/monitor height with different supports. The exploration and finetuning can be a process, so embrace it.

Add movements & stretches into your routine

Another key part of ergonomics is moving your body. Even with a workspace that supports your ideal position, we need movement to nourish our bodies.

Consider movement exercises like Jumping Jacks. These can be done with just your arms, just your legs, moving just a little or a lot, seated, standing, and for as many times you want. If Jumping Jacks aren't in your wheelhouse, consider other exercises that you like to do to move your body.

The next part of moving our body is stretching. We know when we give our muscles a 10-second hold, we bring back blood flow to the area. Consider a stretch like "Pack the Punches" Stretches because they end up getting more than one muscle group at a time.

For your neck and shoulders

1. Start with your fingertips at your forehead, palms facing away from you. Bring your elbows down towards the ground. Notice, you'll start making a "W" shape with your arms and will feel an openness in your pecs.

2. Draw your shoulder blades together and down.

3. If this feels like a stretch, then stop right here.

4. If you feel like you might want a little bit more, then extend your arms gently outwards.

For the flexor forearm muscles

1. Clasp your hands together, interlocking your fingers.

2. Then bring your palms away from you, then up towards the ceiling.

3. Remember to breathe here. Sometimes if we're tight, we end up not breathing.

4. After 10 seconds, bring your arms back down

For a back stretch

1. Place your hands on your hip bones.

2. Gently lean back until you feel a gentle stretch.

3. Carefully look up to the ceiling.

4. Then, we're going to gently come back up.

5. Feel free to do another round of this if you'd like.
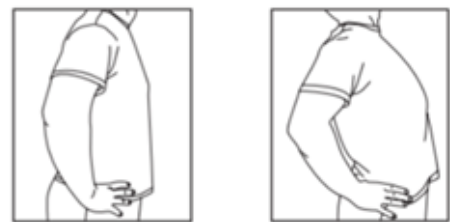
Give yourself a massage

A self-massage is a great way to help relieve tension and bring back blood flow to the area. You can use it as a self-care preventative measure. Just be mindful, if you're not feeling improvement with what you're feeling, then you might want to consider other options at that point. In general, you should listen to your body, stay on muscle, and work around extremely tender spots. Also, if you feel any electric, tingling, zinging feeling, gently take the pressure away.

For your neck

1. Take you pointer and middle fingers on both hands, start at the middle base of your neck.

2. Slowly bring your fingers out to the side and gently push back in.

3. At the base of the skull, at some point, as you're working out towards the ears, you're going to find a tender spot.

4. You can hang out there, push for 10 seconds.

5. You can gently give yourself small circles three to four times in one direction.

6. Then bring yourself down.

For your shoulders

1. Take your hands and come over your shoulders and let your fingers kind of just push into the muscle right again at the top.

2. If you let your arms hang, gravity is going to help get some extra weight. Make small circles, if you'd like, or you can do just constant pressure to the area.

For your elbows

1. Keep your arm to the side.

2. Make a "C" shape with your other hand and cup your arm. Then, follow your bicep down to your elbow.

3. You'll come up to two bones. Gently go over those bones. Then, about an inch or two, down, gently squeeze together with that "C" shaped hand.

4. Keep gentle, consistent pressure or small circles each way.

5. Now, you can repeat the process to the other side.

6. Again, if you feel any tingling, take that pressure off, and maybe move further down the forearm and find other spots.