

Guide to good Posture

<https://medlineplus.gov/guidetogoodposture.html>

Good posture is about more than standing up straight so you can look your best. It is an important part of your long-term health. Making sure that you hold your body the right way, whether you are moving or still, can prevent pain, injuries, and other health problems.

What is posture?

Posture is how you hold your body. There are two types:

- **Dynamic posture** is how you hold yourself when you are moving, like when you are walking, running, or bending over to pick up something.
- **Static posture** is how you hold yourself when you are not moving, like when you are sitting, standing, or sleeping.

It is important to make sure that you have good dynamic and static posture. The key to good posture is the position of your spine. Your spine has three natural curves—at your neck, mid back, and low back. Correct posture should maintain these curves, but not increase them. Your head should be above your shoulders, and the top of your shoulder should be over the hips.

How can posture affect my health?

Poor posture can be bad for your health. Slouching or slumping over can:

- Misalign your musculoskeletal system
- Wear away at your spine, making it more fragile and prone to injury
- Cause neck, shoulder, and back pain
- Decrease your flexibility
- Affect how well your joints move
- Affect your balance and increase your risk of falling
- Make it harder to digest your food

- Make it harder to breathe
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How can I improve my posture in general?

- **Be mindful** of your posture during everyday activities, like watching television, washing dishes, or walking.
 - **Stay active.** Any kind of exercise may help improve your posture, but certain types of exercises can be especially helpful. They include **yoga, tai chi**, and other classes that focus on body awareness. It is also a good idea to do exercises that strengthen your **core** (muscles around your back, abdomen, and pelvis).
 - **Maintain a healthy weight.** Extra weight can weaken your abdominal muscles, cause problems for your pelvis and spine, and contribute to low back pain—all of which can hurt your posture.
 - **Wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes.** High heels, for example, can throw off your balance and force you to walk differently. This puts more stress on your muscles and harms your posture.
 - **Make sure work surfaces are at a comfortable height** for you, whether you're sitting in front of a computer, making dinner, or eating a meal.
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How can I improve my posture when sitting?

Many people spend a lot of their time sitting—either at work, at school, or at home. It is important to sit properly, and to take frequent breaks:

- Switch sitting positions often
- Take brief walks around your office or home
- Gently stretch your muscles every so often to help relieve muscle tension

- Don't cross your legs; keep your feet on the floor, with your ankles in front of your knees
 - Make sure that your feet touch the floor; if not, use a footrest
 - Relax your shoulders; they should not be rounded or pulled backwards
 - Keep your elbows in close to your body; they should be bent between 90 and 120 degrees
 - Make sure that your back is fully supported. Use a back pillow or support if your chair lacks a backrest that supports your lower back's curve
 - Ensure your thighs and hips are supported. You should have a well-padded seat, and your thighs and hips should be parallel to the floor
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How can I improve my posture when standing?

- Stand up straight and tall
- Keep your shoulders back
- Pull your stomach in
- Put your weight mostly on the balls of your feet
- Keep your head level
- Let your arms hang down naturally at your sides
- Keep your feet about shoulder-width apart

Anxiety

<https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness. It might cause symptoms such as:

- Sweating
- Feeling restless or tense
- Rapid heartbeat

It is a **normal reaction to stress** and can sometimes be helpful. For instance, anxiety may:

- Help you cope with a challenge
- Give you a boost of energy
- Improve focus

However, when anxiety is **constant, overwhelming, or interferes with daily life**, it may be an **anxiety disorder**.

What Are Anxiety Disorders?

Anxiety disorders are conditions where anxiety:

- Does **not go away**
 - **Worsens over time**
 - **Interferes** with daily activities like work, school, or relationships
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Types of Anxiety Disorders

1. **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**

- Excessive worry about everyday matters (health, work, family, money)
- Worry occurs almost **daily for at least 6 months**

2. **Panic Disorder**

- **Panic attacks:** Sudden, intense fear without danger
- Episodes can last minutes or longer

3. **Phobias**

- Intense fear of things that pose little/no danger
 - Includes:
 - Specific phobias (e.g., spiders, flying)
 - **Social anxiety disorder** (fear of social situations)
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What Causes Anxiety Disorders?

The exact cause is **unknown**, but contributing factors include:

- **Genetics**
 - **Brain chemistry and biology**
 - **Stress**
 - **Environmental influences**
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Who Is at Risk for Anxiety Disorders?

Risk factors can differ depending on the disorder, but general risk factors include:

- **Personality traits:** Shyness or social withdrawal
 - **Traumatic experiences** in childhood or adulthood
 - **Family history** of anxiety or other mental health conditions
 - **Medical conditions**, such as:
 - Thyroid disorders
 - Heart arrhythmias
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Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders

Though they vary, common symptoms include:

1. Psychological/Emotional:

- Persistent anxious thoughts or beliefs
- Inability to control worry
- Restlessness or tension

2. Physical:

- Pounding or rapid heartbeat
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Unexplained aches and pains

3. Behavioral:

- Avoidance of situations once considered normal

Note: Stimulants like **caffeine** or some medications can worsen symptoms.

How Are Anxiety Disorders Diagnosed?

Diagnosis may involve:

1. **Medical history and physical exam**
 2. **Lab tests** to rule out other conditions
 3. **Psychological evaluation**, either by your doctor or a mental health professional
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Treatments for Anxiety Disorders

1. Psychotherapy (Talk Therapy):

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**
 - Teaches new thinking and behavioral strategies
 - Often includes **exposure therapy** (facing fears)
- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**
 - Uses **mindfulness** and **goal setting**
 - Helps manage discomfort and anxiety

2. Medication:

- Includes **anti-anxiety medications** and **antidepressants**
- Effectiveness may vary by individual and condition
- You may need to try more than one type to find what works best

Exercise: 6 Benefits of Regular Physical Activity

Want to feel better, have more energy, and even add years to your life? Just **exercise**.

Regular physical activity provides powerful health benefits—regardless of your age, sex, or physical condition.

1. Exercise Controls Weight

- Helps prevent **excess weight gain** or maintain weight loss.
 - Burns calories — the more intense the activity, the more calories burned.
 - Small actions (like using stairs or doing chores) add up.
 - **Consistency is key.**
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2. Exercise Combats Health Conditions and Diseases

Exercise improves HDL ("good") cholesterol and reduces triglycerides, promoting smooth blood flow and reducing cardiovascular risks.

It helps manage or prevent:

- Stroke
- Metabolic syndrome
- High blood pressure
- Type 2 diabetes
- Depression & anxiety
- Some cancers

- Arthritis
 - Falls
 - Cognitive decline
 - Early death
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3. Exercise Improves Mood

- Stimulates brain chemicals that reduce stress and anxiety.
 - Helps you feel **happier, more relaxed, and confident**.
 - Boosts **self-esteem**.
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4. Exercise Boosts Energy

- Improves **muscle strength** and **endurance**.
 - Enhances **heart and lung health** for better daily performance.
 - Increases energy for tasks like chores and shopping.
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5. Exercise Promotes Better Sleep

- Helps you fall asleep faster and improves sleep quality.
 - Tip: Avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
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6. Exercise Can Be Fun — and Social!

- A great way to **unwind**, **enjoy nature**, or **bond with others**.
 - Try:
 - Dance classes
 - Hiking
 - Team sports
 - New fitness activities
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Exercise Recommendations

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

Aerobic Activity

- **150 minutes/week** of moderate aerobic exercise (e.g., brisk walking, swimming).
- **75 minutes/week** of vigorous aerobic exercise (e.g., running, aerobic dancing).
- Or an **equivalent mix** of both.
- Spread activity across the week.

Bonus:

300+ minutes/week = more health benefits & weight control.

Strength Training

- At least **2 days a week**.
- Target **all major muscle groups**.
- One set of 12–15 reps with enough resistance to fatigue the muscle is sufficient.

Examples:

- Bodyweight exercises (e.g., pushups, squats)
- Weights or resistance bands
- Water resistance or climbing

Regular exercise is not just about fitness — it improves mood, energy, sleep, intimacy, and long-term health. Just start with small steps and keep going. The benefits will follow.

Stress and high blood pressure

"Stress and High Blood Pressure: What's the Connection?"

Stress and High Blood Pressure: What's the Connection?

▲ Stress Can Cause Temporary Blood Pressure Spikes

- When you're stressed, your body **releases hormones**.
- These hormones:
 - Increase your heart rate.
 - Narrow your blood vessels.
 - **Temporarily raise blood pressure.**

Note: There's *no conclusive evidence* that stress alone causes *long-term high blood pressure*. However, frequent spikes can **damage blood vessels**, the **heart**, and **kidneys** over time — similar to sustained hypertension.

⚠ Unhealthy Reactions to Stress Raise Risk

People often react to stress in ways that increase blood pressure:

- Drinking **too much alcohol** or **caffeine**.
- **Overeating** or eating **unhealthy food**.
- **Inactivity** or **lack of exercise**.
- Poor sleep habits.

Certain **stress-related health conditions** may also contribute to heart risks:

- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**
- **Social isolation**

These conditions may make it harder to:

- Stick to healthy habits.
 - Take medications as prescribed.
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Short-Term Spikes = Long-Term Damage

Even if temporary, repeated blood pressure spikes can lead to:

- **Heart attacks**
 - **Strokes**
 - **Artery damage**
 - **Organ damage**
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How to Reduce Stress and Protect Your Heart

1. Adjust Your Schedule

- Delegate tasks.
- Say no to non-essential activities.

2. Deep Breathing

- Practice slow, deep breathing to activate relaxation response.

3. Exercise Regularly

- Aim for **30 minutes, 3–5 times per week**.
- Get your doctor's OK before starting, especially with high blood pressure.

4. Yoga & Meditation

- Reduce tension and promote calm.

5. Get Enough Sleep

- Rest improves emotional resilience and stress control.

6. Reframe Problems

- Accept feelings and focus on finding solutions.

7. Find What Works for You

- Explore and commit to stress relief techniques that suit your lifestyle.

Bottom Line

- Managing stress **may not lower blood pressure for everyone**, but:
 - It encourages healthy behaviors.
 - It supports **overall heart health**.
- Combine stress management with **exercise, sleep, healthy eating**, and **medical care** for best results.

Stress Relief from Laughter

Whether you're guffawing at a sitcom on TV or quietly giggling at a newspaper cartoon, laughing does you good. Laughter is a great form of stress relief, and that's no joke.

Stress relief from laughter

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data is mounting about the positive things laughter can do.

Short-term benefits

A good laugh has great short-term effects. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

- Stimulate many organs. Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- Activate and relieve your stress response. A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response, and it can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.
- Soothe tension. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

Long-term effects

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long term. Laughter may:

- Improve your immune system. Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.
- Relieve pain. Laughter may ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.
- Increase personal satisfaction. Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.
- Improve your mood. Many people experience depression, sometimes due to chronic illnesses. Laughter can help lessen your stress, depression and anxiety and may make you feel happier.

It can also improve your self-esteem.

Improve your sense of humor

Are you afraid that you have an underdeveloped — or nonexistent — sense of humor? No problem. Humor can be learned. In fact, developing or refining your sense of humor may be easier than you think.

- Put humor on your horizon. Find a few simple items, such as photos, greeting cards or comic strips, that make you chuckle. Then hang them up at home or in your office, or collect them in a file or notebook. Keep funny movies, TV shows, books, magazines or comedy videos on hand for when you need an added humor boost. Look online at joke websites or silly videos. Listen to humorous podcasts. Go to a comedy club.
- Laugh and the world laughs with you. Find a way to laugh about your own situations and watch your stress begin to fade away. Even if it feels forced at first, practice laughing. It does your body good.
- Consider trying laughter yoga. In laughter yoga, people practice laughter as a group. Laughter is forced at first, but it can soon turn into spontaneous laughter.
- Share a laugh. Make it a habit to spend time with friends who make you laugh. And then return the favor by sharing funny stories or jokes with those around you.
- Knock, knock. Browse through your local bookstore or library's selection of joke books and add a few jokes to your list that you can share with friends.
- Know what isn't funny. Don't laugh at the expense of others. Some forms of humor aren't appropriate. Use your best judgment to discern a good joke from a bad or hurtful one.

Laughter is the best medicine

Go ahead and give it a try. Turn the corners of your mouth up into a smile and then give a laugh, even if it feels a little forced. Once you've had your chuckle, take stock of how you're feeling. Are your muscles a little less tense? Do you feel more relaxed or buoyant? That's the natural wonder of laughing at work.

Job Burnout

Job burnout: How to spot it and take action

Feeling burned out at work? Find out what you can do when your job affects your health.

Job burnout is a type of stress linked to work. It includes being worn out physically or emotionally. Job burnout also may involve feeling useless, powerless and empty.

Burnout isn't a medical diagnosis. Some experts think that other conditions, such as depression, are behind burnout. Burnout can raise the risk of depression. But depression and burnout are different, and they need different treatments.

Certain personality traits may affect the risk of burnout. Other factors, such as past work experiences, also can affect burnout risk. That helps explain why if two people are dealing with the same job issues, one might have job burnout while the other does not.

Whatever the cause, job burnout can affect your physical and mental health. Here are some tips on how to know if you have job burnout and what you can do about it.

Job burnout symptoms

To find out if you might have job burnout, answer these questions:

- Do you question the value of your work?
- Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Do you feel removed from your work and the people you work with?
- Have you lost patience with co-workers, customers or clients?
- Do you lack the energy to do your job well?
- Is it hard to focus on your job?
- Do you feel little satisfaction from what you get done?
- Do you feel let down by your job?
- Do you doubt your skills and abilities?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better or to numb how you feel?

- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Do you have headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints with no known cause?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might have job burnout. Think about talking to a health care professional or a mental health professional. These symptoms also can be linked to health conditions, such as depression.

Possible causes of job burnout

There are different causes of job burnout. They include:

- Lack of control. Not having a say in how you do your job, such as your schedule, assignments or workload, can lead to job burnout. Not having what you need to do your work also can add to burnout.
- Lack of clarity about what's expected of you. If you're not sure what your boss or others want from you, you're not likely to feel like you're doing a good job.
- Conflicts with others. Maybe you work with an office bully. Or you feel that co-workers are against you. Or your boss is too involved with your work. These conflicts can add to job stress.
- Too much or too little to do. Maybe your job is boring. Or it's so busy you can't keep up with the demands. In these situations, you need a lot of energy to stay focused. This can lead to fatigue and job burnout.
- Lack of support. If you feel alone at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.
- Problems with work-life balance. Maybe your work takes up so much of your time and energy that you have nothing left for family and friends. This lack of balance can lead to job burnout.

Job burnout risk factors

The following factors can add to job burnout:

- Having a heavy workload and working long hours
- Struggling with work-life balance
- Working in a helping profession, such as health care, that involves a lot of giving to others
- Feeling of having little or no control over work

Costs of job burnout

Doing nothing about job burnout can make the problems worse. As a result, you might:

- Feel drained
- Not feel able to cope
- Not be able to sleep
- Be sad, angry, irritable or not care
- Use more alcohol or other substances
- Get heart disease, high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes
- Be more likely to get sick

Handling job burnout

Burnout often involves things in the workplace that you can't control. But there are ways to control how you cope with the stress. To get started:

- Look at your options. Talk to your boss about your concerns. Maybe you can work together to make changes or solve problems. Set realistic goals for what must get done. Find out what can wait. If things at work are not likely to change, you might look for a job that would be a better fit for you.
- Seek support. Ask co-workers, friends or loved ones for support. Talking to others might help you cope. Feeling like you belong protects against burnout. If your job offers an employee

assistance program, look at the services offered.

- Try a relaxing activity. Look for activities that can help with stress. Examples are yoga, meditation or tai chi. Something as simple as taking some deep breaths a few times a day can help relieve tension.
- Get some exercise. Regular physical activity can help you cope with stress. It also can take your mind off work.
- Get some sleep. Sleep restores well-being and helps protect your health.
- Practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is being aware of what's going on inside you and around you without judging or reacting. This practice can help you deal with what's happening on the job.