

## Posture & Body Mechanics

How many of you have been told by one authority figure or another “Stand up straight!” “Quit Slumping!” “Sit up!” Sound familiar? Little did we know that neutral posture does not equate to straight or erect posture. Posture is a reflection of the “position” of your body and the many systems (muscles, joints, ligaments, sensory, neurological, visual, respiratory, visceral) that help your body maintain position throughout the day.

Neutral spine position is the normal position of your spine that occurs when the appropriate muscles are allowing it to maintain its natural curve. The natural curve of your spine has certain arches built into it to provide stability and shock absorption. When out of this position, the shock absorbency and stability is decreased and the surrounding structures such as your legs, arms or head have to work harder to maintain stability.



Erect Posture

Slumped Posture

Neutral



Posture encompasses how we hold ourselves (erect, slumped or neutral), how we move in and out of a position and how we control that movement. For example, what muscles do I use to get up from a chair? Did I push up with my arms using more upper body strength, did I extend my back and push with my seat or did I use my legs to help me stand? Do I always stand on one leg? Can I balance the same from right to left?

Different people use different strategies to perform the same activity. We develop motor programs in our brain that allow us to complete an activity, like swinging a golf club or riding a bike, without relearning the mechanics or the “how to” every time we perform that activity. Motor programs are the body’s way to conserve energy. The more the motor programs are used the more efficient and refined it becomes.

In order to achieve “neutrality” we need to balance a system that is not symmetrical and we need to establish a healthy muscular pattern. We need to assure that we can move to the left as easily as we can to the right, that we can balance the same from right to left and that we can control movement patterns (biomechanics) throughout the day. We need to respect the many influences that affect our ability to achieve neutrality, move in and out of neutral without system failure or tissue injury. We need to restore an entire system.