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## Tricks to Better Posture

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updated: November 27, 2010

Proper posture decreases tension in your joints, muscles and nerves which can be irritated and compressed to cause pain and stiffness. It also improves your appearance, sports (<http://www.ehow.com/sports/>) performance and normal movement patterns, such as squatting, climbing stairs and lifting. There are different strategies you can do daily to improve your posture and prevent back and hip pain.

### Left-Right Corrective

Most people have different ranges of motion, strength and tension in their muscles and joints between their left and right sides of their bodies. This causes your body to appear tilted to one side, such as shifting most of your weight to your right, or appear to be rotated to one side, such as rotating your right shoulder to the front. All of these posture deviations cause back, hip, knee and other joint pain, according to Anthony Carey, owner and corrective exercise (<http://www.ehow.com/sports/>) specialist of Function First Exercise Studio in San Diego, California.

When you stretch or strengthen a weaker or uncoordinated side, perform two extra sets on that side in each workout session until both sides feel more even. For example, if you do a standing hip flexor stretch with one leg in front of the other, and your left side is tighter than your right, stretch the left three times and stretch the right side one or two times.

### Intelligent Stretching

Stretching lengthens and relaxes tight muscles and connective tissues that cause stiffness and tenderness. Instead of stretching your limbs first, start your stretches with your torso and hips because most tightness and stiffness originate from the center of your body, according to physical therapist Chris Frederick, co-author of "Stretch to Win." For example, stretch your buttocks and deep hip muscles and tissues first. Then proceed to your hip flexors and outer hips, and down to your legs, ankles and feet. However, if you have an ankle or foot injury, start from the injured site before moving up toward your hip. Consult with your therapist or exercise professional before attempting any self-stretching or exercise.

### Wall Stand

You can do this simple exercise in any place that has a flat, unobstructed wall. The wall stand lengthens and strengthens the muscles deep in your spine, abdominals and pelvis. Carey recommends you do this exercise several times a day to prevent the hunching posture that people get when they work at a desk for a long period of time.

Stand with your head, back, arms and buttocks touching the wall, and push your body against it. Breathe deeply five to six times as you push. When you are done, walk around for about 15 to 20 seconds, and repeat the exercise two more times.

## References

- "Pain-Free Program"; Anthony Carey; 2005
- "Stretch to Win"; Ann and Chris Frederick; 2006

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