

Reduce Pain Caused by Daily Activities

Fitness Handout:

Did you know that time spent sitting, standing and even sleeping could be hurting your body? The cumulative effect of the long hours spent in these positions can lead to prolonged damage to both your muscles and fascia (strong connective tissue). To keep your body fully functional, it is important to address this damage by performing corrective exercises.

To determine what specific exercises to do, you can work with a qualified personal trainer who has expertise in this area. You can also make the following adjustments yourself. These adjustments, from Justin Price, MA, co-owner of The BioMechanics in San Diego and creator of The BioMechanics Method, can alleviate some of the problems caused by improper seated, standing and sleeping postures.

Sitting

The human body is designed to be upright and weight bearing on two feet, with the hips extended under the spine to support the torso and head. In today's world, however, people are spending more time in seated positions.

Use these suggestions to help prevent problems from sitting too long:

- Get out of your chair several times a day to promote hip/leg and spine extension.
- Convert your workspace to a standing desk or walk when possible instead of driving.
- Change chairs and positions often or alternate sitting on a stability ball with sitting on an office chair.

Standing

Prolonged sitting postures can lead to weak arches in your feet. As a result, the feet are less able to accept your body weight when you stand up, and the arches collapse. You may start shifting from side to side in an effort to redistribute the weight and alleviate the discomfort. This continual shifting can cause pain in the long run.

Consider these strategies for preventing pain associated with standing:

- Become aware of habits like shifting weight from side to side when standing.
- Learn about supportive footwear choices, and *gradually* incorporate footwear changes into your life. Eliminate or at least reduce the amount of time spent wearing high-heeled shoes.
- Pay attention to your upper-body postures when standing. Crossing the arms, talking on a cell phone, carrying a heavy bag on one shoulder or putting your hands in your pockets can create tight fascia.

Sleeping

Chronic muscular imbalances and restrictions created by prolonged seated and standing postures can make sleeping uncomfortable. You may experience pain from sleeping on the back, side or stomach.

Incorporate these suggestions to adopt better sleeping positions—and reduce pain:

- Sleep on your back on a bed that is firm enough, so that neither the lower back nor the thoracic spine (the middle to upper back) sinks into the mattress. If you feel uncomfortable in this position, try placing a wedge or pillow(s) under the knees. Start off in this position for just a few minutes a night and gradually increase the amount of time you spend this way. As the structures of your lumbar spine begin to adjust, the pillow height (with pillow under the knees) can be reduced.
- Choose a pillow thickness for supporting your head that puts the eyes in a position where they are perpendicular to the ceiling. Ensure that the pillow thickness is not so great that it pushes the head too far forward.
- If you sleep on your side, place a pillow between the knees. This will help keep the top leg in line with the hip socket. When sleeping on your side, the pillow you use for the head should be thick enough to keep the head in line with the spine.
- Avoid sleeping on the stomach, as that can arch the lower back excessively and twist the neck.

This handout is a service of IDEA, the leading international membership association in the health and fitness industry, [">www.ideafit.com](http://www.ideafit.com).

SIDEBAR: Using a Thera Cane®

This trigger-point massage technique can rejuvenate the muscles and fasciae on the back of the neck; they can get chronically shortened from arching the neck back and up to look at a computer screen.

With the cane, apply steady pressure to any sore spots you feel on the back of the neck from the top of the shoulders all the way up to the base of the skull. Perform for 3–5 minutes daily.

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