

# Yoga for Better Posture

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Your posture is a reflection of how you are and who you are. We stand tall when we feel confident, self-assured, slump when we feel low, crane our neck forward to connect with others or round our shoulders when vulnerable. Good posture ensures the forces in movement are directed through the joints in a neutral position with minimal wear and tear. Poor posture and the resulting muscle imbalances cause joint and spinal disc problems and associated muscle spasm as muscles contract in an attempt to protect the overloaded joint. A healthy posture means the chest, heart and pelvis are open giving the organs space to function optimally, blood and lymph flow easily and the spine assumes an ideal S-shape. The subtle energy flows easily through the meridian, nadii and chakra system of the body. We feel vital and alive. When the spine is in correct alignment, the vertebrae and discs are nourished by the natural flow of spinal fluid keeping them supple and youthful.

Regular practice of yoga naturally develops greater body awareness and our posture improves as we develop greater flexibility, core strength and confidence in ourselves. We learn to breathe as the body was designed to and take responsibility for our own health and well-being.



**Ideal posture** is when an imaginary plumb line runs down the side of the body from the ear lobe through the tip of the shoulder, centre of the thorax, the lumbar vertebrae, the centre of the femur (thigh) bone and knee joint to the lateral malleolus (round bone) of the ankle.

The head is neutral, tilted neither forward or back, shoulder blades lie flat against the ribs, spine retains its natural S-shape curve, pelvis is in neutral and knee joints are in line with the ankle not held locked in hyper extension or forward in flexion, the lower leg is vertical and at a right angle to the sole of the foot.

An S-shape spine has just the right amount of lordosis curve of the neck, kyphosis curve of the mid back/thoracic region, lordosis curve of the lower back and kyphosis curve of the tail bone.

## Specific yoga postures can be practiced to correct common postural misalignments

### Kyphosis/Lordosis



Increased cervical neck lordosis  
Weak neck extensors  
Tight neck flexors

Increased thoracic kyphosis  
Rounded shoulders  
Tight chest muscles  
Weak Rhomboids  
Weak Lower Trapezius

Increased lumbar lordosis  
Pelvis tilted forward  
Weak abdominals and gluteal muscles  
Tight hip flexors and hamstrings

### Yoga Postures to Help

Tadasana (mountain pose) with neck retraction  
Neck roll forward to chin and slowly curl up as if rolling a tennis ball from the chest to chin  
First two stages of the Cobra, Cat, Fish posture

Alternate arm circles in EBR2\*  
Flowing Eagle Stretch\*  
Warrior 1, Maltese Cross with warm up stretches  
Step lift arms warm up for Back with chest open  
Third and fourth stage of Cobra  
Charity posture, Bow posture, Camel posture

Flowing forward Bend EBR2  
Warrior 1 + 2, Anahata Breath (see below)  
Runner, Locust posture, Bridge posture  
Forward bend, Dog posture, Earth Sequence

## Flatback



Head held forward of plumbline  
Increased cervical neck lordosis

Upper thoracics are rounded, lower  
Thoracics are flattened

Lumbar lordosis flattened  
Hips held in extension  
Hamstrings are short and tight,  
Pulling pelvis backward  
Hip flexors are long and weak  
Weak gluteal muscles

## Yoga Postures to Help

See Kyphosis/Lordosis posture

As Kyphosis/Lordosis posture  
Cat posture, Cobra all 3 stages, Bow posture

Dog posture, Warrior 1+2, Crane posture,  
Forward bend, Flowing forward bend  
Butterfly posture, Bridge posture  
Alternate arm /leg lifting in EBR7  
Locust posture, Anahata breath (squat breathe  
out what you don't need push arms away,  
straighten legs breathe in what you need,  
draw arms to chest)

## Swayback (common in those who slouch a lot)



Head held forward of plumbline  
Increased cervical neck lordosis

Slight thoracic kyphosis  
Thoracic extensors are lengthened

Pelvis tilted backwards and thrown forward  
Of plumbline, so pelvis sways forward  
Hips held in Extension  
Lumbar lordosis flattened  
Hip flexors long and weak  
Hamstrings short and tight  
Weak gluteal muscles  
Knees are held locked back

## Yoga Postures to Help

See Kyphosis/Lordosis posture

As for Rounded shoulders  
Cobra stages one to three

As for Flatback posture plus  
Opening heart and confidence  
Cat/Lion posture and Warrior

Tadasana mountain posture

## Suggested Home Practice to Improve Posture

**\*Good Alignment Stretch:** Stand on your toes stretching arms overhead, pulling ribs out of hips, gently lower heels to floor, bringing arms and shoulders down without losing the length through the mid-section of the body.

**\*Alternate Arm Circles from EBR2:** Stand legs apart, knees over feet squat down as you cross your arms in a circle in front of the body lifting them up over head as if you were taking off a jumper, return arms to sides, straighten legs. Repeat with other hand in front each time, breathe in as arms lift and out as they return to your sides completing the circle. Repeat 4-5 times.

**\*Flowing Eagle Stretch:** Squat as in previous exercise. Arms at sides bring them up to heart, palms up, fingers touching, breathe in, turn palms down and push them down to hip level fingers touching, breathe out, lift both arms forward overhead in front of body, breathe in, separate fingers and lower arms to the sides to shoulder level, breathe out, bend elbows and pull hands toward shoulder joint making the eagle mudra (all four fingers curled together to touch thumb), hold as you breathe for 2 breath cycles. Repeat 4-5 times.

Follow with **Warrior 1 posture** opening the chest, into **Warrior 2 posture** and then specific postures from the list above that you may need, finish with **Tree Posture or Earth Sequence**.