

Osteoarthritis – Protect Your Spine

It is important to be aware of the position of our bodies and the ways that we move, in order to reduce the amount of stress that goes through the neck and back. Small but consistent changes to our bodies' position can help to reduce pain, minimize damage to the structures of the spine, and help to make daily activities easier.

Alignment and Posture

- The spine has a natural “S” curve that puts the least amount of stress on the structures of the spine. “Check in” on your posture regularly and correct your position:
 - Lift your breastbone towards the ceiling to lengthen your spine
 - Bring your shoulder blades back and down.
 - Tuck your chin back to keep your head over your spine.
- Move or change position often, e.g. alternate between sitting and standing
- Make small adjustments to prolonged sitting/standing positions to shift the loads on your joints, eg: stand with a foot on a step stool, move forward/backward in a chair
- Use equipment for better alignment when sitting or lying for long periods, e.g.: ergonomic chair, removable backrests, cushions, pillows



Pace Activities

- Take short, frequent breaks during activities – rest *before* you are tired or in pain
- Rest in a lying or reclined position to reduce the load on the spine
- Spread out heavier tasks during your day and week



Reduce Load on the Spine

- Avoid bending and lifting when possible – instead wheel, kick, slide, or push items.
- When you need to bend or lift, use good body mechanics. Bring items close to your body and keep a neutral spine position. For lighter items, use the golfers' reach (pictured).
- Consider walking aids such as walking poles, to support and unload the spine while walking.
- Remove unnecessary items carried in bags/purses
- Work towards a healthy body weight

