Many think of “good posture” as sitting or standing up “straight”. When this posture can’t be held for longer than a few moments, it can be easy to give up and resign to having “bad posture”. Trying to maintain one posture all day long is unrealistic - unless you are an advanced Zen monk!

Your body is in a constant state of change and is designed to move throughout the day. Use the tips below to apply safe and healthy ways of sitting, standing, and finding postures that work for you. Your ability to stay in any posture depends on the environment, the task being performed, and your level of health and awareness.

**Best Practices:**

- Whether sitting or standing, be conscious of how you are working.
- Movement is key – find ways to incorporate movement throughout the day.
- Listen to your body – change to another posture when you start to fatigue.
- Make adjustments as needed to maintain neutral postures.
- Take breaks and vary tasks.
- Obtain support when needed.

**What is Posture?** Posture is an ongoing series of positions and movements. Posture is an active and dynamic process dependent on the person, task, environment, and gravity.

**Neutral Posture:** Each joint and body part has a neutral posture where structures are in a position of maximum ease and efficiency. Neutral postures are desirable because they place the least amount of strain on tissues, joints, internal organs, and muscles. They are easy to maintain with minimal effort, and give your body biomechanical advantages to do work – making work easier, safer and more comfortable.

**TIP:** Learn what neutral postures are and use them as much as possible throughout the day to ease the load on your body. Daily activity will often pull you out of neutral postures, so think of them as reference points that you return to frequently to rebalance and reload.

**Work Heights for Sitting and for Standing:**

- Keep your work at approximate elbow height.
  - Shoulders relaxed and upper arms hang normally at the sides of your body.
  - Elbows bent at 90 degrees or in a more open angle.
  - Forearms should be in-line with your wrists so that your wrists are not bent up or down.
- Adjust visual targets to be slightly below eye level.
  - Your head remains neutral while your eyes gaze slightly downwards.
  - Bifocal or progressive lenses may require lower visual targets.
Find Postures That Work for You

- Use recommended options to the right as a reference.
- Some postures may be better suited to specific work tasks than others.
- Research shows that a slightly reclined sitting posture can be beneficial.
- Make sure your spine is aligned in whichever postures you alternate between.

What is a Neutral Spine and “Keeping the Curves”?  
A neutral spine maintains three natural curves: a small inward curve along the back of your neck, a small outward curve at your upper back, and a small inward curve at your lower, lumbar spine. A neutral spine aligns the different parts of your body while “keeping the curves.” The three curves can get distorted if you try to force them into an erect posture, or if you let fatigue and gravity strain the curves into a forwards or sideways slump.

Standing
When the spine is in neutral, your ears, shoulders, hips, knees and ankles should be balanced along a straight line. Your abdomen should be engaged to provide balance and support to your lower back. Imagine a plumb line hanging from your ears to your feet.

Sitting
Sitting posture differs from standing because your weight is shifted backwards from your feet. While your back and hip angle will vary depending on sitting position, your spine should be in neutral in all positions. Your knees should be bent approx. 90 degrees or in a more open angle. Your feet should be supported to anchor your spine and allow you to balance on your sitting bones.

What are “Sitting Bones”?  
Sitting bones (ischial tuberosities) are located at the base of your pelvis. Your spine securely joins to your pelvis. The position of your sitting bones affects the rest of your spine. If you roll backwards or forwards on your sit bones, your spine follows in a chain reaction, and the natural curves are pulled out of shape in a domino effect. Balance on your sit bones to align your spine.

To find your sitting bones:
- Sit on a firm surface, with your feet supported. Sit on your hands, palms up. You will feel pointy sitting bones through the more cushioned portion of your bottom. Notice that you can roll forwards and backwards on these bones and that your spine will follow. Remove your hands and find the neutral, balanced point where you are not angled too far backwards or forwards. Your spine should now be in neutral.

Exercise: Try lifting your feet and see how it affects your balance.
• How long should you sit:
  o Determine your own tolerance.
  o Change postures when fatigued or stand for a bit.
  o Avoid prolonged sitting without varying your posture.

• How to sit:
  o Find a posture where you can sit with your spine in neutral. Keep the curves!
  o Use your backrest to support your back instead of trying to hold yourself up.
  o Learn to adjust your chair for improved support.
    ▪ Your lower back should be supported by the chair’s lumbar support.
    ▪ The upper portion of the backrest should support your natural spine and shoulder contours.
    ▪ Backrest shape should not be too hollow or push you out of neutral.
    ▪ The seat pan should support your thighs.
  o Sit on your “sitting bones” to relieve back discomfort. Avoid rolling back on your tailbone.
  o Support your feet on the floor or footrest.
    ▪ When your feet are not supported, it is difficult to balance on your sitting bones.
    ▪ An angled footrest may help if you are sitting in a reclined posture.
  o Use your feet to move between areas of your desk.
  o Make sure you have enough legroom. Relocate file cabinets and trashcans.
  o Vary your postures often.
  o Avoid leaning on the desk. If you’re leaning, it’s time to change your posture!
  o Take frequent breaks and breathe using your abdomen to help relax tight upper shoulder muscles.
  o Avoid reaching. Keep frequently-used items within easy reach.
• **How long should you stand:**
  - Determine your own tolerance.
  - Change postures when fatigued or sit to recover.
  - Start with brief periods and increase over time.
  - Avoid prolonged standing.

• **How to stand:**
  - Distribute weight evenly between both legs.
  - Keep knees loose and unlocked.
  - Distribute weight evenly along your whole foot – from heels to balls of feet.
  - Shift your weight to reduce fatigue.
  - Avoid leaning on the desk. If you’re leaning, it’s time to sit!
  - Move around – fidget, dance, or take a few steps.
  - Avoid collapsing onto one hip – keep your hips parallel.
  - Stagger your stance or try supporting one foot on footrest.
  - Move between sides of your desk to perform different work tasks.
  - Wear supportive shoes that provide cushion and good arch support.
  - Stand on an anti-fatigue mat if more cushioning is needed.