



# Correct use of body mechanics to protect your body



## GUEST CORNER

LIZE  
LUBBE

Proper body mechanics involve using our body efficiently and safely during our daily activities and are a combination of posture, movement, and balance.

Maintaining proper body mechanics is crucial to prevent injury and to promote our overall wellness.

As a body movement specialist, I recommend the following to assist you in maintaining proper body mechanics:

### BALANCED POSTURE ALIGNMENT AT REST

Avoid staying in the sitting or standing position for too long and follow the suggestions below while sleeping.

#### Sitting:

- Sitting at a desk: place your buttocks towards the back of your chair. Position your feet flat on the ground at a 90-degree angle and elongate your spine from your pelvic sitting bones to the tip of your head. Leaning forward from your waist to get closer to your computer or workstation. Tuck your chin slightly and relax your jaw and shoulders.

- Sitting on a couch: support your arms on the armrests or a pillow, relax your neck and shoulders. Elevate your legs and feet on a footrest or ottoman with the knees slightly bend and sufficient lower back support. Use a lumbar roll or pillow to provide extra support behind your back and neck if needed.

#### Standing:

- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart. Lift your ribcage up and away from your diaphragm and elongate the whole spine up to the ceiling. Tuck your tailbone slightly down and under your pelvis to get your lower spine in a neutral alignment, meaning not too arched back or too rounded forward. Relax your shoulders and neck and tighten your abdominal and glutes (buttock muscles). Keep your knees straight but not locked.

#### Sleeping:

- Sleep on a firm mattress with soft pillow topper. Back and side sleeping are considered better to maintain a neutral spine alignment. Support your neck with a softer pillow and tuck the pillow in the nape of your neck to support your neck. Keep a pillow under the knees for the back sleepers and between the knees

for side sleepers.

### PROPER BODY ALIGNMENT DURING MOVEMENT

- We move in and out of a neutral spine alignment during daily activities. The aim is to keep the body as close to the neutral position, meaning a straight spine using the postural muscles to support your body frame and the center of gravity within your base of support. The base of support (BOS) is the contact your body makes with the surface. If you use a cane, your BOS has three points. A wider BOS provides more stability for the body.

- Sit to stand: scoot to the edge of the chair. Feet shoulder-width apart on the ground, lean forward and bend from the waist. If needed, use the arm rests to push up, contract your core and glutes to get up to standing. Lengthening your spine up to the ceiling, pelvic muscles tight and straightening your knees by tightening your Quads (thigh muscles). Exhale as you get up to get to your neutral standing alignment.

- Walking: keep the spine elongated and walk with long strides contacting with your heels first as you weight-bear, then roll through your foot to push off with the ball of your feet. Clear your back foot to swing your leg through. Keep shoulders relax and swing arms gently.

- Lifting and carrying: the process of lifting frequently places the greatest loads on the low back and, therefore, has the highest risk of injury. It is more important to use the correct lifting techniques to prevent injuries, than how heavy the weight is that you lift. Here are a few tips for a safe lifting technique, whether it is a bag of mulch, or picking up your grandchild from the floor:

- o Stand close to the object immediately in front of you.
- o Have a wide stance to get a big BOS.
- o Bend your knees into a wide, full squat, keeping your back straight.
- o Engage your core, and glutes, hinge from your hips and exhale as you pick up the object.
- o Bring the load close to your body and chest.
- o Straighten the knees and come to the upright position.

### MAINTAIN YOUR BALANCE DURING MOVEMENT

Balance is defined as the ability to maintain the body's line of gravity through the center of your BOS. When carrying groceries or a grandchild, your center of gravity changes and will affect your balance and stability. Therefore,



stay active, fit, and flexible to keep your muscles and joints strong and flexible. Here are a few suggestions to keep you balanced during movement:

- Never hold your breath when you lift a heavy object, always exhale when your muscles contract.
- Rather push than pull a heavy object.
- Avoid any torquing or twisting of your back when lifting objects.
- Use a wide BOS to protect your body and back when lifting.
- When you feel unstable walking, increase

your BOS by using a cane or walker.

- Strengthen your core, pelvic and leg muscles.

- Ask for help if something is too heavy to lift by yourself.

Stay healthy and safe and enjoy the summer months ahead. Be mindful of using correct body mechanics to prevent injuries and protect your body. If you have any concerns or pain, please contact your physician or physical therapist for further guidance.

*Lize Lubbe is the owner of Lize Lubbe Physical Therapy with its main practice located at 892 Route 35 in Cross River and a PT Studio in the premises of Apex Fitness (where her team focus on the rehabilitation of sports-related injuries). Learn more by calling 914-875-9430, emailing [contact@lizeclubbept.com](mailto:contact@lizeclubbept.com) or visiting [www.lizeclubbept.com](http://www.lizeclubbept.com).*



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