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6 Tips for Better Posture

Posture relates to the position of your spine while you are sitting, standing, or moving. How you hold your body impacts your musculoskeletal health in a number of ways. Poor posture can lead to back pain, headaches, poor balance, neck pain, breathing difficulties, and other health issues.¹

To help improve your posture, try these tips:^{1,3}

- 1. Center your head above your shoulders.** Adjust the position of your head to align your ears with the center of your shoulders.
- 2. Pull your shoulders back.** Press your shoulder blades together periodically to reset your positioning as you move through your daily routines.
- 3. Pull in your belly.** Draw in your abdomen as if you were pulling your belly button toward your spine.
- 4. Take frequent stretch breaks.** Staying in one position for too long can lead to stiff joints and strained muscles, especially if your posture is poor to begin with. Take mini stretch breaks throughout the day to realign your spine.
- 5. Avoid looking down at your phone.** Looking down at your phone for long periods of time can cause neck strain. Reposition your phone frequently, or limit the amount of time you spend looking down.

- 6. Have an ergonomic assessment.** Repositioning your keyboard, monitor, and seating can dramatically improve your posture. Have a professional assess your workspace setup to help improve your posture during the workday.

As artificial intelligence (AI) and wearable devices continue to become more affordable and accessible, [intelligent clothing](#) like shirts with built-in sensors may become a viable option to help assess your posture in the future.^{2,4} In the meantime, fine-tuning the position of your body throughout the day can help reduce spinal muscle strain.

Improving your posture requires a great deal of self-awareness. By making small corrections to your daily routines, you can minimize or avoid posture-related health conditions.

Poor posture can lead to back pain, headaches, poor balance, neck pain, breathing difficulties, and other health issues.

1. Medline Plus. [Guide to Good Posture](#). Accessed Sept 25, 2023.

2. Petz, Phillip & Eibensteiner, Florian & Langer, Josef. (2021). Sensor Shirt as Universal Platform for Real-Time Monitoring of Posture and Movements for Occupational Health and Ergonomics. *Procedia Computer Science*. 180. 200-207. 10.1016/j.procs.2021.01.157.

3. Mayo Clinic. [Good posture tips](#). Accessed Sept 25, 2023.

4. Wired. [The Best Posture Correctors to Put a Stop to Your Slouch](#). Jul 7, 2023. Accessed Sept 13, 2023.



Preserving Bone Density

Most adults achieve peak bone mass by age 30. After that, bone loss occurs more rapidly than bone mass can be built.¹ This loss of bone density can lead to osteoporosis, a progressive bone disease that increases the risk of bone fractures. Approximately 1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men over the age of 50 develop osteoporosis.²

Here are some ways you can prevent bone loss:

- **Do weight-bearing exercises.** Weight-bearing exercises are activities that move against gravity. Yoga, hiking, and strength training exercises (free weights, elastic bands, or machines) are all effective at maintaining bone density.¹
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking triggers bone demineralization, which can weaken bones and accelerate the development of osteoporosis.
- **Choose foods that support bone health.** Certain minerals play a key role in maintaining bone health. If you cannot get sufficient amounts of minerals through food alone, talk with your healthcare provider to see if dietary supplements may be needed.
 - Calcium: Most adults need approximately 1,000-1,200 milligrams of calcium each day.³ Good food sources of calcium include dairy products (milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese) and green leafy vegetables (kale, collard greens, spinach).
 - Vitamin D: It is recommended that most adults get 15-20 micrograms (600-800 IU) of vitamin D each day. Foods that are high in vitamin D include milk, cod liver oil, fish (trout, salmon, tuna), and fortified orange



juice.³ Your body can also make vitamin D when the skin is exposed to sunlight for 5 to 30 minutes.

- Magnesium: Most adults need around 400 milligrams of magnesium each day.³ Good sources include wheat bran, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds, coconut milk, and quinoa.

Making lifestyle adjustments to preserve bone density can reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis and related bone disorders. The good news is that small changes like these can also have a positive impact on many other areas of your wellbeing.

1. Mayo Clinic. [5 ways to build strong bones as you age](#). Jul 31, 2020. Accessed Sept 25, 2023.

2. National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute on Aging. [Osteoporosis](#). Content reviewed Nov 15, 2022. Accessed Sept 26, 2023.

3. Nutrient Recommendations and Databases, Dietary Reference Intakes. National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Dietary Supplements Published 1998. Accessed Sept 26, 2023.



Simple Strategies to Reduce Neck Pain

Neck pain is becoming more prevalent with the increased use of digital devices. Common causes of neck pain include poor posture, overuse of neck muscles, repetitive movements, poor sleep positioning, osteoarthritis, herniated disks, pinched nerves, and other health conditions.¹

Neck pain is generally classified into three categories, depending on the duration of symptoms:³

- **Acute:** pain lasting less than 6 weeks
- **Subacute:** pain lasting 6 to 12 weeks
- **Chronic:** pain lasting more than 12 weeks

In many cases, minor neck pain can be addressed with stretching, ice or heat, massage, or over-the-counter pain medications. However, some neck pain may require medical treatment.

Here are some simple strategies to help combat minor neck pain:^{1,2,3}

- **Ice it.** Ice can help relieve muscle tightness. Packages of frozen vegetables rolled in a thin cloth or towel work well as an ice pack.
- **Warm it.** For some people, heat works better than ice. Try taking a warm shower or placing a warm towel on the sore area.
- **Improve your posture.** Sit and stand up straight with the crown of your head over your shoulders. Keep your chin tilted down slightly and relax your shoulders.
- **Stretch.** Gentle neck rotations and shoulder rolls can reduce muscle tension and pain.

- **Lighten your load.** Carrying heavy handbags or backpacks can strain your neck and shoulder muscles. Use a bag with wheels or reduce the weight in your bags.
- **Get an ergonomic assessment.** Whether you work from home or in an office setting, have a professional give your workspace a makeover.
- **Consider complementary therapies.** Massage, acupuncture, and chiropractic adjustments may offer relief from neck pain.
- **Take micro breaks.** Micro breaks can help relieve stiffness and muscle tension caused by prolonged sitting.

If neck pain persists or worsens despite your self-management attempts, seek guidance from your healthcare provider.¹ Additional testing may be needed to identify the source of your discomfort.

In many cases, minor neck pain can be addressed with stretching, ice or heat, massage, or over-the-counter pain medications.

1. Cleveland Clinic. [Neck Pain](#). Accessed Sept 26, 2023.

2. Healthline. [Neck Pain: Symptoms, Causes, and How to Treat It](#). Accessed Sept 26, 2023.

3. UpToDate. [Patient education: Neck pain \(Beyond the Basics\)](#). Last updated Sep 20, 2022. Accessed Sept 4, 2023.

SPINACH & CHEESE STUFFED SHELLS

Cook Time

1 hour 15 minutes

Servings

6

Ingredients

- 24 jumbo pasta shells, (8 ounces)
- 1 ½ teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2 pounds fresh spinach, trimmed and washed, or two 10-ounce packages frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 2 cups part-skim ricotta cheese
- ⅔ cup plain dry breadcrumbs
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 large egg white, lightly beaten
- 3 cups prepared marinara sauce, preferably low-sodium

Instructions

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Cook shells in a large pot of boiling water, stirring often, until just tender, about 15 minutes or according to package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 3 minutes. If using fresh spinach, add it in batches and toss with tongs until wilted. Drain in a colander, pressing out excess moisture with the back of a spoon. Let cool. If using thawed frozen, add it to the onions and toss to mix well. Set aside.

Combine ricotta, breadcrumbs, 1/4 cup Parmesan and nutmeg in a bowl; mix well. Add the reserved spinach and season with salt and pepper. Stir in egg white.

Stuff each of the reserved shells with a generous 2 tablespoons of the ricotta mixture. Spread 1 cup marinara sauce in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange the stuffed shells in a single layer. Top with the remaining 2 cups of the sauce and sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese. Bake until the top is golden and the shells are heated through, about 30 minutes. (If the top browns too quickly, tent loosely with foil.) Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.



Nutrition Facts

Calories	439
Total Fat	13g
Sodium	569mg
Carbohydrate	58g
Dietary Fiber	7g
Protein	25g