



Neutral Spine

Dynamic Spine Stabilization Program

The term “neutral spine” describes a healthy position where your back is correctly balanced. This balance gives you the greatest comfort and stability.

Learning to find your neutral spine position and keeping it while doing activities of daily living and exercising protects your back from increased stress and strain and helps you move safely.

Everyone has a unique neutral spine position. Use the information in this booklet to practice finding your neutral spine while lying, sitting and standing. Remember to **breathe normally** when finding your neutral spine position. Only do a movement or hold a position that does not cause you to have more pain than usual.

If you have questions about this information or your medical condition, talk with a member of your health care team.

Finding neutral spine while lying on your back

1. Lie on your back on a firm, flat surface with your knees bent and your feet flat on the surface. The surface can be a bed or the floor.
2. Put your hands on your hips.
3. Slowly roll your hips backward to press your back toward the surface (Figure 1).
4. Then slowly roll your hips forward to lift your back away from the surface (Figure 2).
5. Slowly move between these two positions until you find your most comfortable position. This is your neutral spine position (Figure 3).



Figure 1. Flat spine

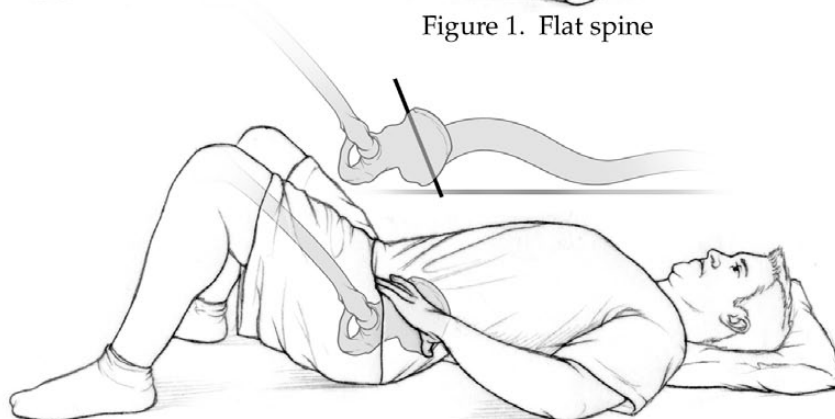


Figure 2. Arched spine



Figure 3. Neutral spine

Finding neutral spine while sitting

1. Sit on the front half of a chair.
2. Put your hands on your hips.
3. Slowly roll your hips backward to move your head and chest downward (Figure 4).
4. Then slowly roll your hips forward to sit up straight, arching your back, and pushing your chest outward (Figure 5).
5. Slowly move between these two positions to find your most comfortable position. This is your neutral spine position (Figure 6).



Figure 4. Rounded spine



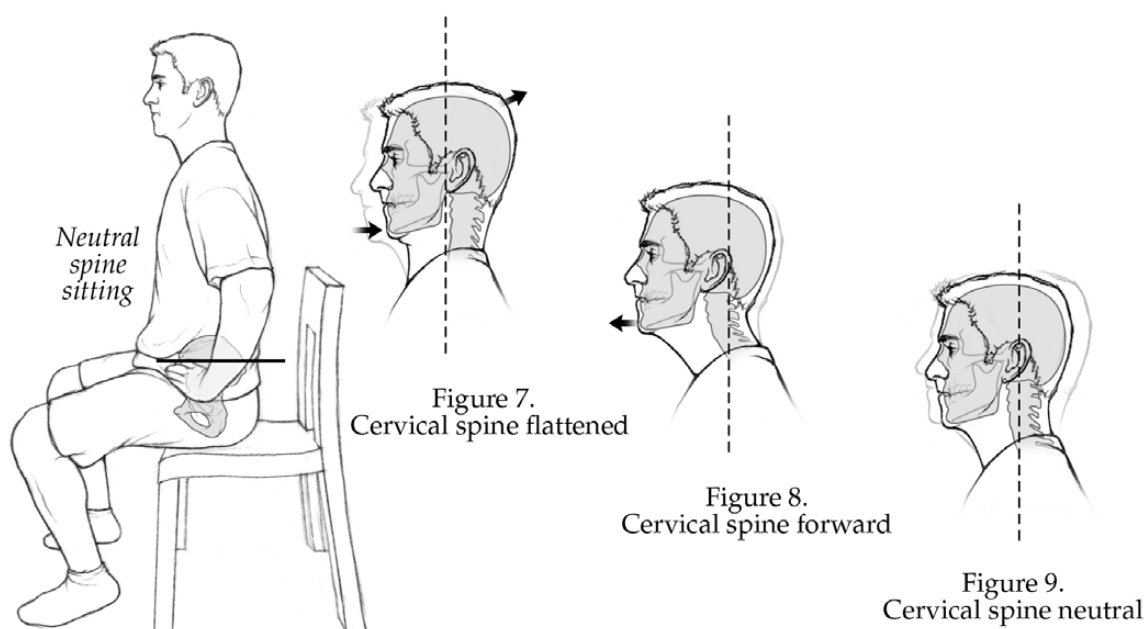
Figure 5. Arched spine



Figure 6. Neutral spine

Cervical spine stabilization while sitting

1. Slowly move your head back and up as if you were pressing your neck against a wall (Figure 7).
2. Then slowly move your chin forward as if you were moving your neck away from a wall (Figure 8).
3. Slowly move between these two positions to find your most comfortable position. This is the neutral position for your head and neck (Figure 9).



Finding neutral spine while standing

1. Stand tall with your hands on your hips. Keep your shoulders, arms and knees relaxed. Stand with your heels and back against a wall if needed.
2. Slowly roll your hips backward to press your back toward the wall (Figure 10).
3. Then slowly roll your hips forward to move your back away from the wall (Figure 11).
4. Slowly move between these two positions to find your most comfortable position. This is your neutral spine position (Figure 12).



Figure 10. Flat spine



Figure 11. Arched spine

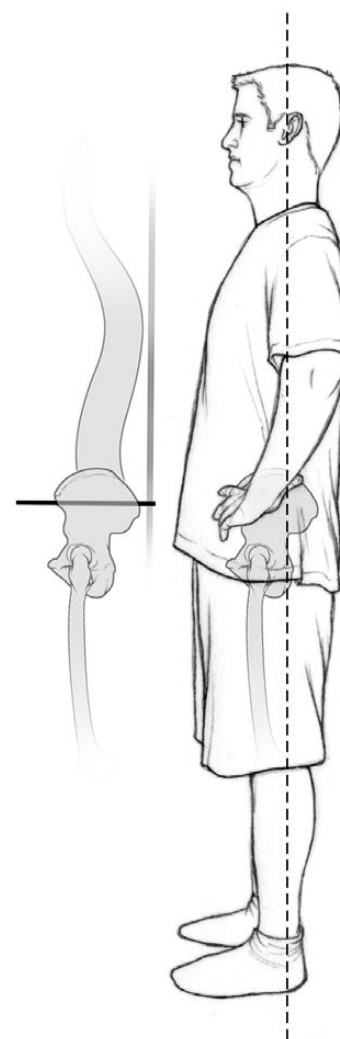
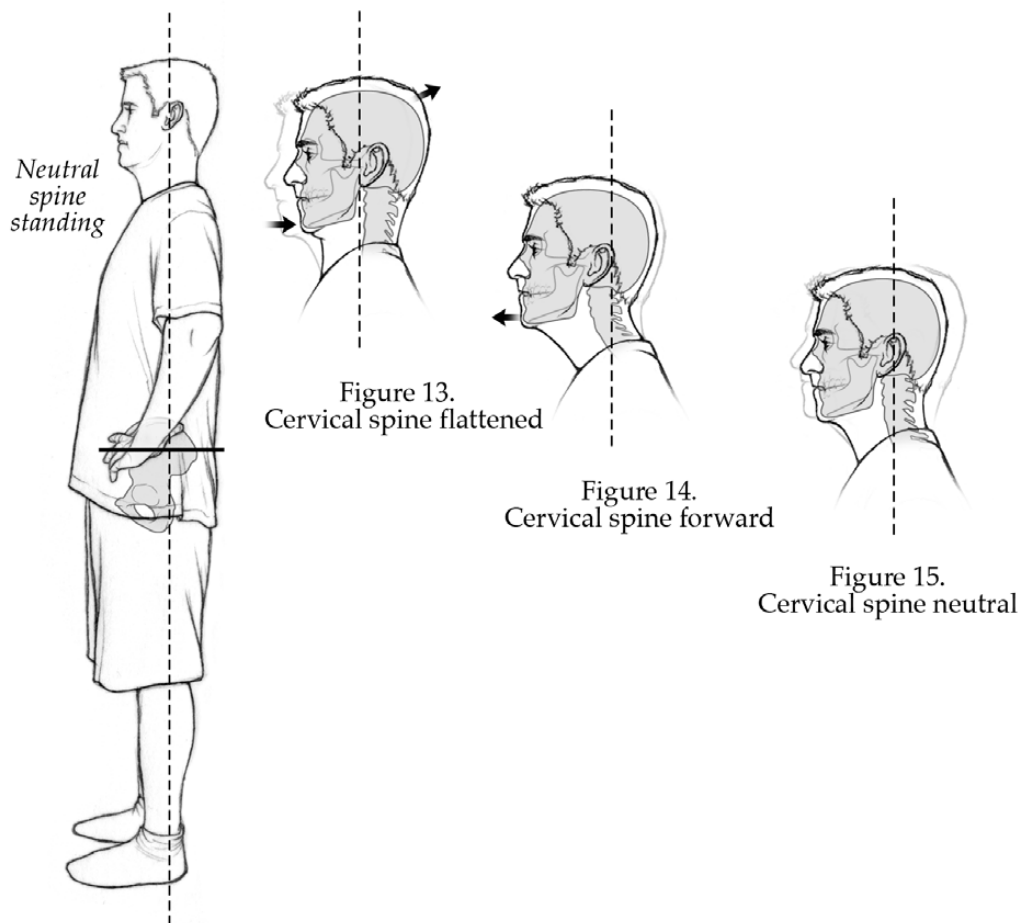


Figure 12. Neutral spine

Cervical spine stabilization while standing

1. Slowly move your head back and up as if you were pressing your neck against a wall (Figure 13).
2. Then slowly move your chin forward as if you were moving your neck away from a wall (Figure 14).
3. Slowly move between these two positions to find your most comfortable position. This is the neutral position for your head and neck (Figure 15).



Notes

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal patient of Mayo Clinic for more than 40 years. She was a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching, even as she assembled a museum-quality collection of antiques and fine art. She was best known by Mayo staff for her patient advocacy and support.

Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. Mrs. Lips had a profound appreciation for the care she received at Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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