

## Easy Ways to Perfect Your Posture

by [BettyConfidential.com](http://BettyConfidential.com)

Master great posture with these tips from "The Women's Health Diet" by Stephen Perrine and the editors of Women's Health.

-The Betty Editors, [BettyConfidential.com](http://BettyConfidential.com)

*Feeling pain in your neck, shoulders or back and don't know why? Your poor posture may be to blame. Here's an excerpt from **The Women's Health Diet** ([womenshealthdietbook.com](http://womenshealthdietbook.com))—a brand new book by Stephen Perrine, Leah Flickinger, and the editors of Women's Health—on how to recognize and reverse the damage that your poor posture is causing you. Like your mother always said, "No slouching!"*

*Read New Workout to Try: [Angie Lee's Knockout Body Workout](#)*

### Analyze Your Alignment

Wear something form-fitting and take two full-body photos, one from the front and one from the side. Relax your muscles but stand as tall as you can, with your feet hip-width apart. Now compare your photos to the one below to diagnose your posture problems. If you spot one of the following problems, add our fixes to your regular workout plan.

#### Diagnosis: Forward Head

Your chin protrudes out from your chest and your legs are in front of your shoulders.

**Where pain strikes:** Neck

**The problem:** Stiff muscles in the back of your neck

**Fix it:** Moving only your head, drop your chin down and in toward your neck while stretching the back of your neck. Hold for 5 seconds; do this 10 times daily.

**The problem:** Weak muscles in front of your neck

**Fix it:** Do this daily: Lying faceup on the floor, lift your head so it just clears the floor. Raise your head and hold for 5 seconds; do 2 or 3 sets of 12 reps.



#### Diagnosis: Elevated Shoulder

Your shoulders are not in line with your collarbone but encroach up toward your ears.

**Where pain strikes:** Neck and shoulders

**The problem:** A shortened trapezius muscle (the muscle that starts at the back of your neck and runs across your upper back)

**Fix it:** Perform this stretch: With your higher-side arm behind your back, tilt your head away from your elevated side until you feel the stretch in your upper trapezius. Apply slight pressure with your free hand on your stretched muscle. Hold for 30 seconds; repeat 3 times.

**The problem:** A weak serratus anterior, the muscle just under your pecs that runs from

your upper ribs to your shoulder blades

**Fix it:** Sit upright in a chair with your hands next to your hips, palms down on the seat, and keep your arms straight. Without moving your arms, push down on the chair until your hips lift off the seat and your torso rises. Hold for 5 seconds. That's 1 rep; do 2 or 3 sets of 12 reps.

**Diagnosis:** Anterior Pelvic Tilt

Your lower abdomen protrudes forward and your lower back is arched.

**Where pain strikes:** Lower back

**The problem:** Tight hip flexors (muscles that allow you to move your thighs up to your abdomen)

**Fix it:** Perform this stretch: Kneel on one knee and tighten your butt muscles on your kneeling side until you feel the front of your hip stretching comfortably. Reach upward with the arm that's on your kneeling side and stretch in the opposite direction. Hold this position for 30 seconds and repeat 3 times on each side.

**The problem:** Weak glutes

**Fix it:** Lie on your back with your knees bent about 90 degrees. Squeeze your glutes together and push your hips upward until your body is straight from knees to shoulders. Hold for 5 seconds; complete 2 or 3 sets of 12 reps.



**Diagnosis:** Rounded Shoulders

Your shoulders are in front of your hips and ankles instead of aligned with them.

**Where pain strikes:** Neck, shoulders, or back

**The problem:** Tight chest muscles

**Fix it:** Place your arms against a doorjamb in the high-five position (that is, forming an L), your elbows bent 90 degrees. Step through the doorway until you feel the stretch in your chest and the front of your shoulders. Hold for 30 seconds for 1 set; do 4.

**The problem:** Weakness in the middle and lower parts of your chest

**Fix it:** Lying facedown on the floor, place each arm at a 90-degree angle in the high-five position. Without changing your elbow angle, raise both arms by pulling your shoulders back and squeezing your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5 seconds; do 2 or 3 sets of 12 reps.

**Diagnosis:** Hunched Back

Your shoulders are rounded forward and your chest is concave.

**Where pain strikes:** Neck, shoulders, back

**The problem:** Poor upper-back mobility

**Fix it:** Lie faceup on a foam roller placed about midback, perpendicular to your spine. Place your hands behind your head and arch your upper back over the roller 5 times. Adjust the roller and repeat for each segment of your upper back.

**The problem:** Weak muscles in your back

**Fix it:** Lie facedown with your arms at your sides, palms down. Lift your chest and hands slightly off the floor, and squeeze your shoulder blades together while keeping your chin down. Hold for 5 seconds; do 2 or 3 sets of 12 reps.