

Healthy Posture

Assessment



Healthy Posture Quiz ^{2.2}

Vocabulary Mix & Match

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| 1. ANATOMICAL POSITION | A. A state of equal hip height, a neutral pelvic tilt, a neutral front-to-back placement and the pelvis is pointing straight ahead |
| 2. HEALTHY POSTURE | B. In humans, defined as "standing up straight with the body at rest" (Biology Dictionary) |
| 3. NEUTRAL PELVIS | C. Another way to describe anatomical position; refers to standing with the bones stacked vertically and the two sides of the body displaying symmetry |
| 4. NEUTRAL SPINE | D. "An attitude of the body" |
| 5. POSTURE | E. A natural and comfortable bearing of the body that includes a comfortably neutral spine and promotes healthy internal functioning and muscular efficiency |
| 6. STANDARD ANATOMICAL POSITION | F. A state in which the spinal curves are not too much or too little for the individual's healthy norm |
| 7. STANDING IN NEUTRAL | G. Standing up straight and facing forward with the arms by the sides and palms facing forward |

1. Define the phrase "anatomical position."

2. What does it mean to stand in "neutral?"

11. What common lifestyle factor has a significant impact on posture and, therefore, healthy functioning?

Healthy Posture Answer Key ^{2.2}

Vocabulary Mix & Match

ANATOMICAL POSITION (1)	→	(B)	In humans, defined as “standing up straight with the body at rest” (Biology Dictionary)
HEALTHY POSTURE (2)	→	(E)	A natural and comfortable bearing of the body that includes a comfortably neutral spine and promotes healthy internal functioning and muscular efficiency
NEUTRAL PELVIS (3)	→	(A)	A state of equal hip height, a neutral pelvic tilt, a neutral front-to-back placement and the pelvis is pointing straight ahead
NEUTRAL SPINE (4)	→	(F)	A state in which the spinal curves are not too much or too little for the individual's healthy norm
POSTURE (5)	→	(D)	“An attitude of the body”
STANDARD ANATOMICAL POSITION (6)	→	(G)	Standing up straight and facing forward with the arms by the sides and palms facing forward
STANDING IN NEUTRAL (7)	→	(C)	Another way to describe anatomical position; refers to standing with the bones stacked vertically and the two sides of the body displaying symmetry

1. Define the phrase “anatomical position.”
 - In anatomy and physiology, the phrase “anatomical position” for humans is defined as “standing up straight with the body at rest.” (Biology Dictionary)
2. What does it mean to stand in “neutral?”
 - Another way to describe “anatomical position” is standing in “neutral” which refers to standing with the bones stacked vertically and the two sides of the body displaying symmetry.
3. Explain the term “standard anatomical position.”
 - “Standard anatomical position” is basically synonymous with Tadasana (Mountain Pose).
 - It refers to standing up straight and facing forward with the arms by the sides and palms facing forward.

4. Provide two definitions of “posture.”

One definition is “an attitude of the body.” It goes on to say:

Good posture cannot be defined by a rigid formula; it is usually considered to be the natural and comfortable bearing of the body in normal, healthy persons. This means that in a standing position the body is naturally, but not rigidly, straight, and that in a sitting position the back is comfortably straight. Good standing and sitting posture help promote normal functioning of the body’s organs and increases the efficiency of the muscles, thereby minimizing fatigue.

While that definition is fairly helpful, the idea of a “straight” spine tends to be misleading since the spine is naturally curved. A better term may be “neutral.” Thus, we might define healthy standing and sitting posture as:

A natural and comfortable bearing of the body that includes a comfortably neutral spine and promotes healthy internal functioning and muscular efficiency.

5. What criteria are often used when identifying healthy posture?

The identification of healthy posture often involves these criteria:

- 1) A neutral spine
- 2) A neutral pelvis
- 3) Muscular balance
- 4) Body symmetry – It’s common to find bodily symmetry as a stated factor in healthy posture and pose alignment. However, please review Body Symmetry vs. Balance below for important considerations.

6. Why does healthy posture matter?

While posture may be discussed in terms of how it affects one's appearance, here we focus on the impact that posture has on healthy functioning.

- **Healthy posture promotes healthy internal functioning and muscular efficiency.**

Fundamental to why yoga works is its use of breath practices and the overall effect on the nervous system and stress. The ability to breathe naturally without constriction is a key to promoting health. Poor posture, however, can lead to poor breathing.

Did you know that your ability to take a deep, full breath is influenced by your posture?... If the muscles that allow your rib cage to expand are tight — due to habitual slouching or other postural problems — your lungs won’t be able to expand to their maximum... And if some of your chest or back muscles are weak, your endurance will be affected... To maintain good posture for optimum respiration, cultivating both the flexibility and strength of your torso muscles is vital. – **Nina Zolotow**

7. Describe a “neutral” spine.

- Since the spine is naturally curved, a neutral spine isn't straight but is instead demonstrated when the curves are not too much or too little for the individual's healthy norm.
- Biomechanics experts explain that a neutral spine is where it is "most relaxed."

8. Why may students find it difficult to identify a neutral spine?

- A person with chronically poor posture and the related muscular imbalances will typically have a difficult time, at first, in identifying this state. This is in part because the student may correlate what feels "comfortable" or "normal" with "relaxed" despite exhibiting poor posture and spinal stress. (Read more in Bernie Clark's teaching below.)

When you stand in mountain pose (Tadasana), can you find the position for your spine that has the least amount of tension? If so, that is likely your neutral position. Unfortunately, chronically poor posture can also feel relaxed, but there may be a lot of stress seeping into the connective tissues because the muscles have lost their tone. When the muscles are weak, the fascia has to do the job of the muscles. When you pay attention to the tension in your spine, you need to notice not just muscular tension, but also the stresses in your joints and fascia... You may have to experiment—try different postures and check out how each position of your spine feels. Where do you feel free, light, long, yet relaxed? That is probably your neutral position. If this experimentation still doesn't work, use a mirror or the eyes of a qualified teacher to help you discover your neutral spine. – **Bernie Clark**

9. Describe four considerations for pelvic alignment in *Tadasana* (Mountain Pose).

Roger Cole describes these four aspects of pelvis and hip alignment in *Tadasana*:

- 1) Equal Hip Height
- 2) Neutral Pelvic Tilt
- 3) Neutral Front-to-Back Placement
- 4) Pelvis Pointing Straight Ahead

10. While general symmetry is correlated with healthy posture, describe Jenni Rawlings case for focusing less on symmetry and more on balance.

- Typically, pose alignment includes finding symmetry between the two sides of the body.
- While general symmetry is correlated with healthy posture, Jenni Rawlings lays out the case here why idealizing symmetry is unsupported by research and by the body itself, which demonstrates asymmetry of the lungs and other internal organs.

Although an ideal of symmetry seems intuitively valuable in yoga, in reality no strong evidence exists to support this common belief. Countless scientific studies have drawn no link between body asymmetries and pain, dysfunction, and poor health. While this realization may seem surprising and completely antithetical to what most of us were taught in yoga teacher trainings, a look at the inner structure of our body [shows that we] are all asymmetrical on the inside... Our two lungs are innately different from one another in both size and structure... And whereas our heart sits to the left of center, our large liver sits to the right of center... Our diaphragm, our main muscle of respiration, is also asymmetrical! Scientific evidence simply does not support the belief that symmetrical alignment is more ideal than any other alignment... When we idealize the symmetry and "optimal alignment" of a pose like tadasana, we are comparing ourselves to the imaginary, symmetrical, vertically aligned person in the anatomy textbook drawing... simply one arbitrary position that is used as a reference point in the medical field. – **Jenni Rawlings**

- Instead of symmetry Rawlings proposes that the objective be balance.

Whereas symmetry is the quality of sameness on both sides, balance is about steadiness of position — like the tree that has adapted to its environment and does not fall over. For example, picture yoga's side angle pose (utthita parsvakonasana)... Many students will experience a more balanced pose if they can access a rooting engagement from their back hip down through their back heel. This results in an asana that is not necessarily more symmetrical, but is more balanced. If someone were to unexpectedly bump into this student in side angle, the student would be less likely to topple over... If we are able to experience a strong sense of stability, groundedness, and ease in our body, then our naturally asymmetrical body has found its perfect balance. – **Jenni Rawlings, Yoga International, The Myth of Symmetry in Yoga [link](#)**

11. What common lifestyle factor has a significant impact on posture and, therefore, healthy functioning?

- Sitting too much has a significant impact on posture.

Research indicates that on average, an American adult spends 10-12 hours each day sitting... More than 60 percent of people worldwide spend more than three hours a day sitting down, and the researchers calculated that sitting time contributed to some 433,000 deaths a year among 54 countries... Prolonged sitting affects the architecture of the spine, hips and neck as well putting the individual at risk for skeletal fractures. – **Yoga for Healthy Aging**