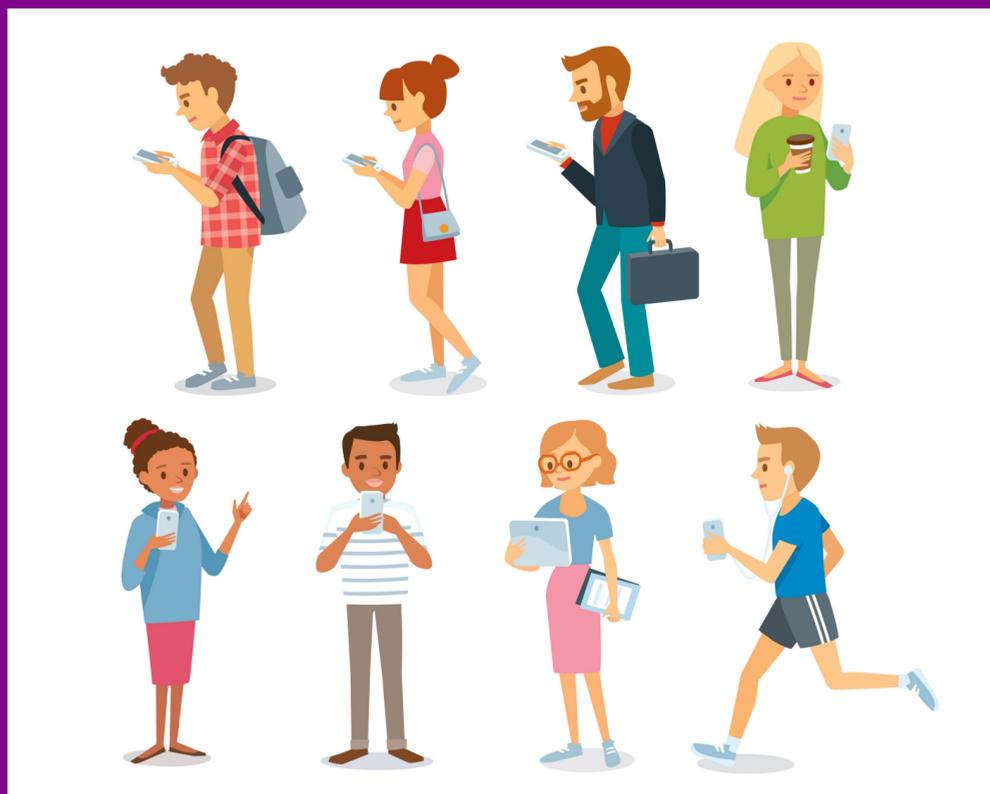




# 10 Tips to Maintain a Healthy Spine

by  
Rekha Rampersad,  
Doctor of  
Chiropractic



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## About The Author

Dr Rekha Rampersad, DC

With more than 15 years of experience in the Chiropractic and Functional Health field, Dr Rekha Rampersad (Chiropractor) is sharing her knowledge with the goal of empowering each person to move well, eat well, think well and BE WELL.

Dr Rekha's own personal health challenges at the age of 17 drove her to seek help outside the mainstream medical paradigm and it was at this time, after her 1st Chiropractic adjustment, when she experienced its healing power it inspired her to embark upon a journey that has been life changing and most rewarding.

Dr Rekha would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every individual that has invited her to be a part of their health journey. It is this trust and support that inspires and motivates her to continue studying, learning and sharing her knowledge and to be a better Chiropractor and health practitioner.

## Introduction

In this report I share with you **10 very simple yet exceptionally powerful strategies** to help you eat, move, think and be well. They are practical and easy to implement. Some may have immediate effect whilst others may require more time.

These are tips I share with every patient and more often than not, they are surprised that by making small lifestyle adjustments, they see some major improvements in the functioning of their spinal health and well-being.

However, remember if you are in pain or discomfort these tips won't necessarily solve the problem. If in pain, always get yourself checked out.

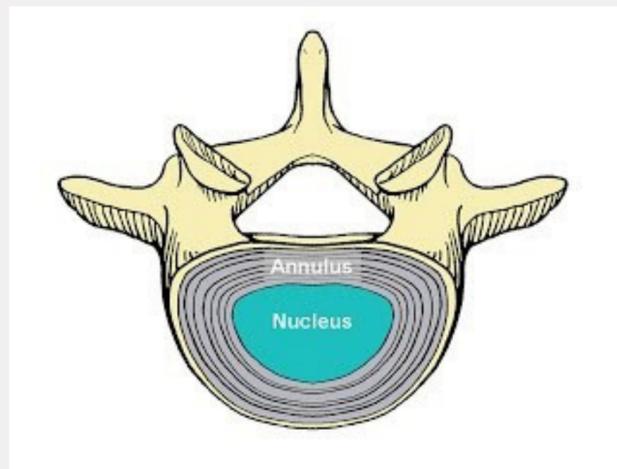
# 10 Tips To Keeping Your Spine Healthy

## 1. Drink water

We all know this one. If I had a pound for every time I heard “ I know I should drink more but I don’t drink enough,” I would have retired years ago!

- The human **body** is made up of **60%** water.

- The central portion of the disc which is known as the nucleus is made up of approximately 80% water. This part of the disc has a poor blood supply so mostly derives its nutrients through the water.



- The **brain** is made up of approximately **75%** water.

Remember water is required for every cell, tissue and organ. The average water intake recommended is between 2-3litres/day. This will vary depending on your daily activities. If you are thirsty you are already heading towards dehydration.

## 2. Keep moving throughout the day

We are designed to move throughout the day. Movement can include walking, physical activities, stretching, dancing, exercising or anything that is actually using your body to move.



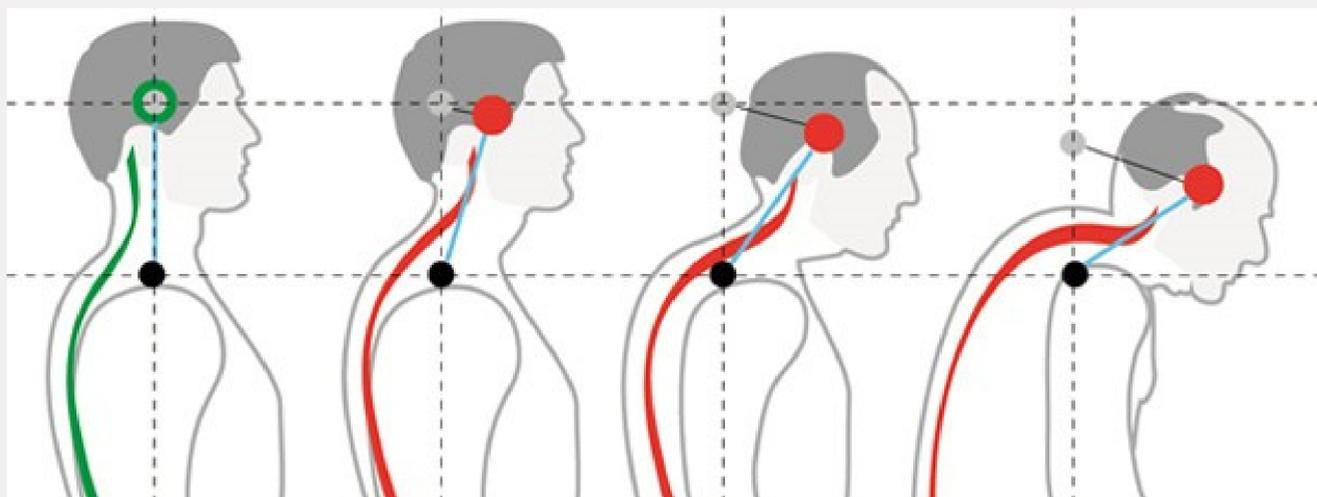
- 67 billion of the 87 billion neuron input to the cerebellum in the brain is from the feet. The cerebellum is involved with balance and co-ordination.
- Proper motion increases:-
  - blood flow,
  - builds muscle strength,
  - improves bone strength,
  - decreases muscle tension,
  - provides relief from static body positioning.
  - Movement supplies fluid and nutrients to the intervertebral discs of the spine.

Just getting up from your seated position regularly every **20-30 minutes** will improve spinal functioning.

Keep moving! It's why we have two legs.

### 3. Check in with your head posture regularly throughout the day

A **Forward head posture** is where the position of the head is in front of the mid line of the body.



People who have round shouldered postures with a forward head position will have :

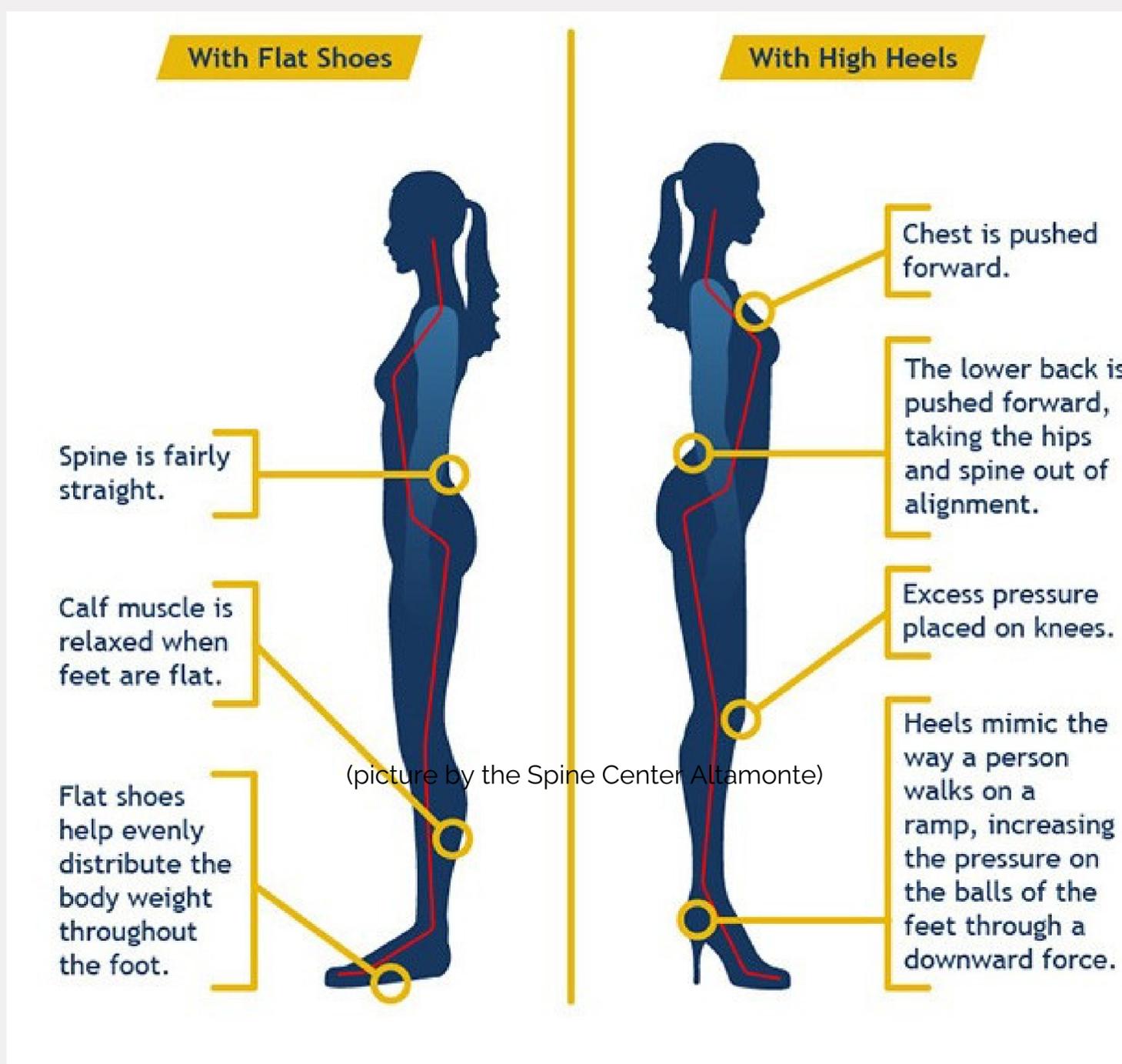
- Musculature around the front of the neck and chest tighten.
- This may increase resistance to breathing and decrease diaphragm functioning, resulting in short shallow breathing.
- When the diaphragm has this decrease in function, then the accessory breathing muscles especially the scalenes and sternocleidomastoids (SCM) have to work harder.

- These muscles are already being overloaded with the forward head posture and over time may fatigue. Some may describe this feeling as the “head being too heavy for the neck” and begin to experience tension headaches.
- When we are not breathing properly throughout the day, this impacts our oxygen intake and one of the most important factors for nerves to thrive is oxygenation.

Chewing in an upright position promotes healthy digestion compared to when sitting in a reclined/flexed posture.

- Check your posture when eating.
- So many end up sitting on the couch and watching television or are in front of their screens when eating.

#### 4. Ladies, avoid wearing heels daily



Daily use of high heels over numerous years may lead to structural changes of the spine and pelvis.

- Heels place increased pressure on the forefoot causing the lower part of the body to lean forward and the upper part to lean back in order to maintain balance.
- Flattening of the lumbar spine and overloading in this position can weaken musculature over time and cause back problems and pain.
- Not to mention the possibilities of bunions down the line.

The only time to bring out those killer heels is if you are going out for a special occasion where there will be little weight bearing. Definitely not recommended if out dancing- choose softer, more cushioned shoes for that or even better walk, move and dance bare-feet where possible.

## 5. Change your pillows every year



Getting enough quality sleep will require the individual to have good sleeping conditions. In general, getting an adequate amount of sleep is an important factor for living a healthy life.

- Your pillow plays an important role in maintaining proper spinal alignment while you sleep as it serves to support your head and neck throughout the night, so that you can wake up without neck pain or stiffness. And after some time, even the nicest pillow will stop doing that.
- Night after night of sleeping on a pillow causes it to absorb body oil, dead skin cells, and hair. This isn't just gross-sounding—it can also make the pillow smell and, what's worse, can create the perfect environment for dust mites.

Even after all these years in practice I am still surprised when people tell me that they have had their pillows for 5-10 years and sometimes even more. It is an area that many don't think about but let it become a routine where it is replaced once every 12-18 months.

Find a pillow that works for you and that provide adequate support for your neck. It varies from person to person and will also vary as your body ages or is under stress.

## 6. Change your mattress every 8-10 years



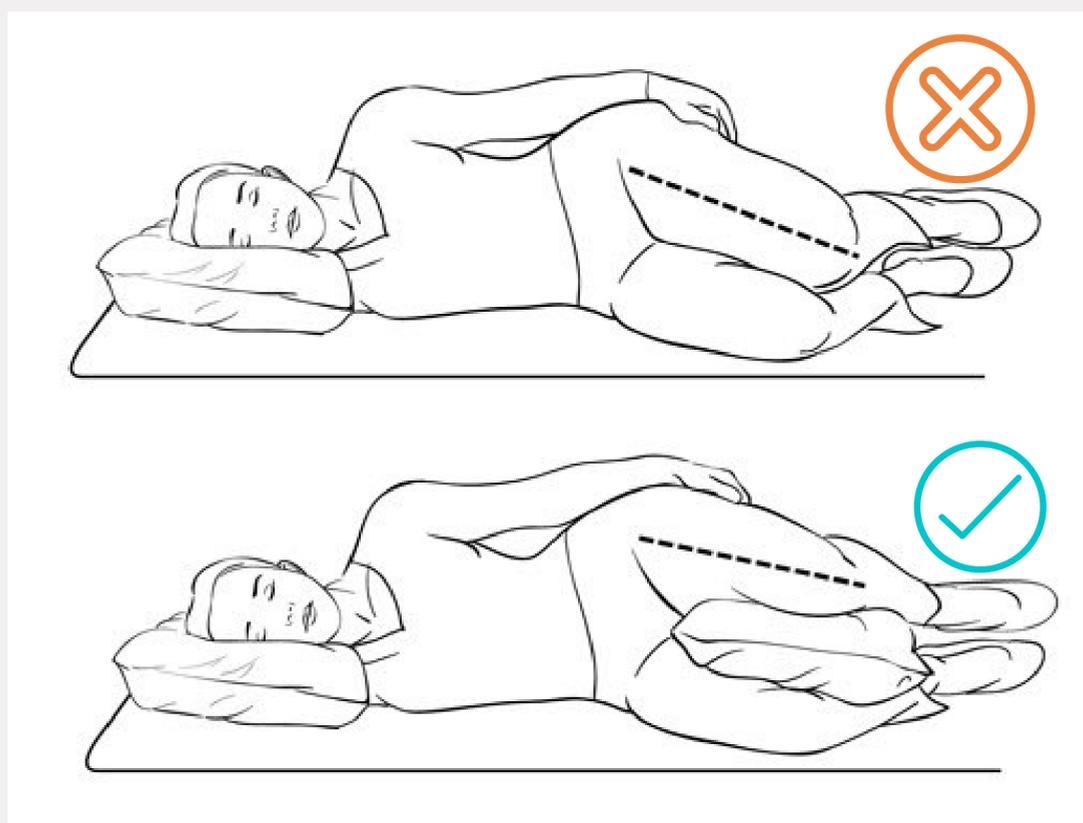
Just like your pillows, your mattress is key in providing support for the spine as you sleep.

- Sleeping is the only time the muscles, ligaments, and other structures in the spine can completely relax.
- With a back injury or disorder, optimal sleep is especially important to the healing process.
- Get to eye level with your mattress, remove all bedding and run your hands along the mattress.
- If you can feel dips and also can see visible dips in the mattress it is way past time to change your mattress.
- Ideally I would recommend one that is firm and often have found patients do better with a pocket sprung mattress.

7. Avoid sleeping in the foetal/recovery position with the top leg draped over as this creates tension into the lower back

Waking up with back pain in the morning in many cases is either due to a poor mattress or stressful sleeping posture.

- When sleeping foetal or curled up, this is a protective posture which means that more of the flexor muscles are engaged which ends up causing weakness of the extensors which are supporting the spine.
- If you prefer sleeping on your side, the top leg should always be behind the bottom leg or straight or you can place a pillow between your knees.



## 8. Watching television is a Habit

As a result we often create habitual patterns around this activity. How we watch it becomes critical with regards to posture especially during a binge watching session or football match!

- Is your television screen directly in front of you, is it up on the wall forcing you to look upwards, are sitting at an angle to it or lying on the couch or bed with neck propped up on pillows when watching it?
- These positions can place strain on the neck and back.
- Make sure you are looking straight at, rather than sitting twisted or turning your head at an angle or up/down to

- Sit with your hips as far back as possible on the couch/chair to avoid slouching
- Also remember to turn your head from right to left, up/down and side to side regularly so that you are taking the neck through a full range of motion especially when sitting for more than 20-30 minutes.



*Picture source: Thinkstock*

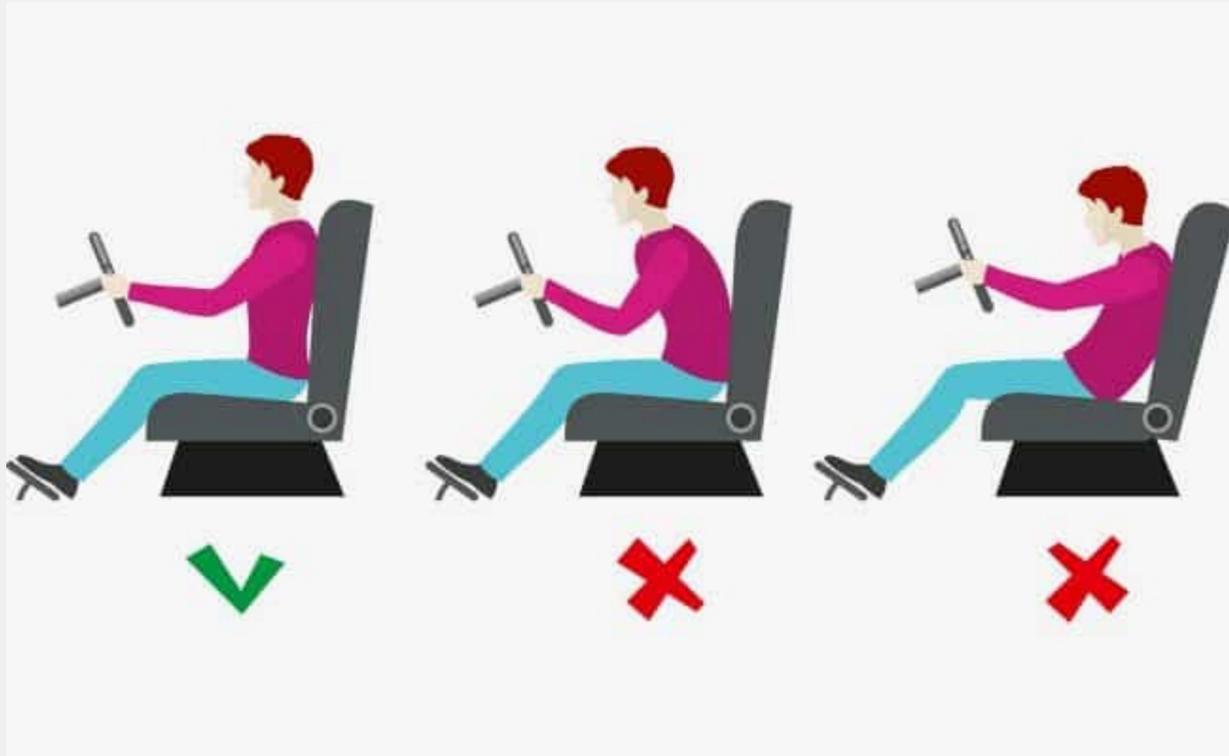
## 9. What's your driving posture like?

Driving can create significant stress on our necks and shoulders causing spinal dysfunction and poor body posture.

Good spinal posture when driving incl:

- Align your bottom against the backrest with no gap in between.
- Shoulders are squared resting against back of seat with arms relaxed below 90° and elbows slightly bent. Steering wheel should be easy to reach with this posture, if not adjust seat or steering wheel.
- Thighs rest comfortably on seat with even distribution of weight and movement to pedals should be from knee to foot not hip to foot.
- Ideally head should be able to rest on head rest with neck parallel to floor. However from chatting with patients over the years often the head rests are not always ergonomically designed, so play around with the positioning of it until you find the best possible position to support your posture.

- Set your mirrors correctly so that you have a 180° view behind you whilst being able to maintain this posture.
- When driving long distances (over an hour), take regular breaks to stretch the muscles, tendons and ligaments.



## 10. Have your spine checked regularly

Most people visit a Chiropractor when they are in pain and usually have been recommended to us or having tried everything else and it not working, give Chiropractic a go. However, remember pain is the last sign that something is wrong.

- By this point the weakness has already set in.
- The spine and brain can no longer adapt to this weakness and you will now experience pain.



·Always remember the iceberg-

~discomfort is when you can see the iceberg at water level,

~pain is moving towards the top of the iceberg,

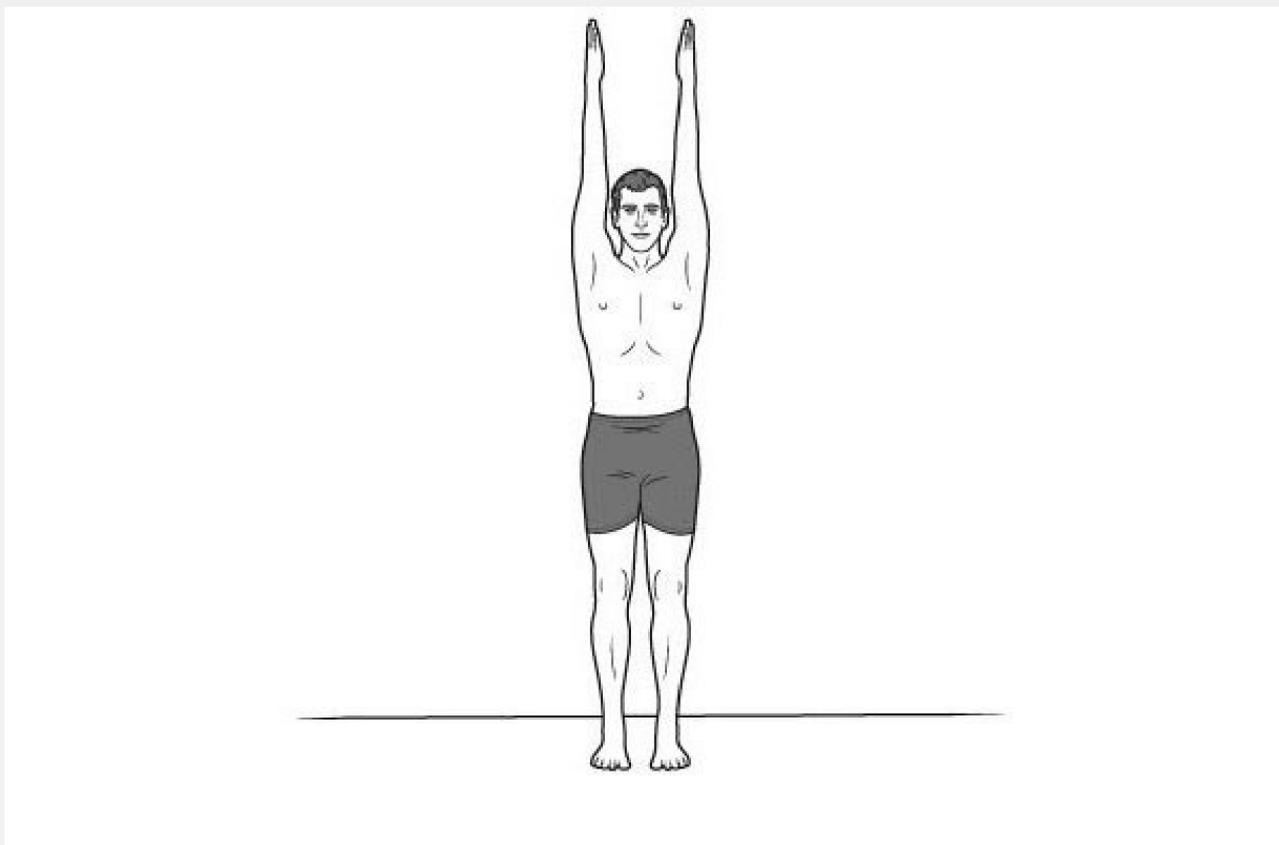
~It is that which is below the iceberg which we often can't see, is what has been building up for days, weeks, months and years leading us to the point of pain.

·Chiropractors and some other physical manual therapists are trained to detect these early dysfunctions in the spine.

·Remember your spine is working 24/7, it cannot be replaced nor can we live without it.

## Bonus

1. In the standing position, move your arms to the side so that they are in line with the body, palms facing forward keeping the entire arm straight (no flexion/bending of elbows), and then lift them towards the ceiling and reach up so you are lifting your upper chest area and shoulders.
- Repeat 5x every hour- this helps to fire the muscles (paraspinal/multifidi) along the spine, providing the spinal segments support.



2. Take a ball and play catch with someone or throw it against the wall at different angles, using both hands to throw and catch. This will allow your body to move in different planes and engage muscles that you are probably not activating enough throughout the day.



3. Most of all connect with those you love as this improves our mood and motivates us to be more active, to take better care of our health and to have a sense of well-being.



4. Eat a variety of foods that come from the earth, especially the green leafy, orange and purple fruits and vegetables to get a more balanced level of vitamins and minerals. Look out for the next e-book which will cover what foods contribute to good spinal and bone health.



## CONCLUSION

10 easy, practical and highly effective strategies (incl. 4 bonus tips) to help you on your path to maintaining a healthier spine. If you only implement one change a week, that will add up and within 2-3 months you will have begun a new way to a healthier spine.

You are in charge of your health and well-being. As a member of your health team, we are there to guide you and provide you with support, knowledge and help you be well.

Be well,  
Dr. Rekha Rampersad, Chiropractor  
Rugby & Leicester

## Health Advice Disclaimer

The information given is not intended as representations of every individual's potential injury. As with any injury, each person's symptoms can vary widely and each person's recovery from injury can also vary depending on background, genetics, previous medical history, application of exercises, posture, motivation to follow advice and various other physical factors.

It is impossible to give a 100% complete accurate diagnosis and prognosis without a thorough physical examination and likewise the advice given for management of an injury cannot be deemed accurate in the absence of examination from one of the General Chiropractic Council Registered Chiropractors

Significant injury risk is possible if you do not follow due diligence and seek suitable professional advice about your injury. No guarantees of specific results are expressly made or implied in this report.

