



The Complete Healthy Back System

# BACK TO LIFE



## The Healthy Back Checklist

# Introduction

Welcome to the Back to Life Healthy Back Checklist. This checklist is full of simple tips and tricks that you can do throughout your day that can have a big impact on the health of your back and body.

While these tips are easy, the hardest part can be remembering to do them. Don't try to do all of them everyday, but pick the ones that seem to help you the most and try to slowly make them your habits. One good way to do this is to associate them with another activity you do every day - like when you have a break at work, or right before you sit down for a meal. It also helps to set reminders on your phone or leave notes posted where you will clearly see them.

Remember - you are looking for progress, not perfection! So don't beat yourself up if you don't do all of these all the time. A few small changes can make a world of difference.

# Daily Tips and Tricks Checklist For a Healthier Back and Body



## **Align Your Posture:**

When you think of having good posture, you probably hear your mother's voice in your head telling you to stand up straight. But there is a lot more that goes in to good posture than just standing tall. Here is how you can stack your posture to help bring your body into better balance:

- Distribute the weight evenly on both of your feet and set your feet directly under your hip sockets. Turn your toes forward and try not to lean to one side.
- Make sure your ankles aren't caving inward. Try to roll a little weight onto the outside edges of your feet so your arches lift slightly and your ankles are stable. As you do this, you might also notice that this helps your knees keep from knocking inward as well.
- Make sure you are not locking your knees. Allow them to have a subtle soft bend to them.
- Keep your hips in a neutral position and gently squeeze your buttock muscles to help support your lower back.
- Engage your core by drawing your navel inward and upward. This will also help bring your low back into a neutral position and prevent it from swaying forward.
- Gently draw the low part of the back of your ribs back so that the ribcage is not popping forward.
- Without arching your middle or lower back, draw the shoulder blades together on the back. You will feel the hunch come out of the upper back and the chest should feel nice and open.
- Draw your chin slightly back so that your ears stack right over your shoulders.
- Engage your core to lift your ribs up away from your hips.
- Relax your shoulders down away from your ears.
- Always try to stand with your ears over your shoulders, shoulders over your hips, hips over your knees and knees over your ankles.



### **When Sitting:**

Most of us spend a majority of our waking time sitting in a chair and the way we sit can make a big difference for the health of our backs. Here are a few tips that can help you sit in a healthier way.

- Don't cross your legs. Instead, plant your feet on the floor, hip width apart, with your knees bent at a ninety degree angle. If your feet don't reach the floor, try stacking some books or a stool under them.
- Relax your shoulders down away from your ears and squeeze them together to prevent your upper back from rounding.
- Stack your ears right over your shoulders rather than leaning your chin forward. For every inch that your chin leans forward, your neck muscles have to strain more to hold up your head.



### **At Your Desk:**

- Elevate your computer screen so it is at your eye level. Looking down places unnecessary strain on your neck and back.
- Sit up tall and try to keep your elbows next to your ribs as you are typing, rather than reaching forward with your arms.
- Get up and take a brief walk around the office at least once every hour. It is important to keep your body moving as much as possible.
- Try sitting on an exercise ball or consider getting an elevated desk so you can stand at work.
- If you spend a lot of time on the phone, consider wearing a headset. Never hold your phone between your ear and your shoulder.
- Always hold your cell phone at eye level when you are texting. Avoid looking down at your phone because this strains your neck. "Text Neck" is a major problem these days.



### **Lighten and Balance Your Load:**

Avoid regularly carrying heavy bags or purses. If you do have to carry a bag or purse, be sure to switch which hand or shoulder you use to carry it. If you repeatedly carry your purse or bag with the same arm, this can lead to major imbalances.



### **Proper Sleep Positions:**

- If you sleep on your side, be sure to place a pillow between your knees. Try to use a pillow that is long enough to go between your knees and your ankles. Or, even better, use a body pillow that you can rest your top arm on as well.
- If you sleep on your back, place a pillow behind your knees.
- Try to avoid sleeping on your stomach.



### **Reduce Stress:**

Stress can be a major contributor to tight achy muscles. And while some stress can be unavoidable, there are simple strategies you can use to try to reduce your stress levels:

- Take slow deep breaths through your nose. Every time you exhale, imagine that your breath is carrying the tension out of your body with it. Feel the muscles in your shoulders and neck begin to soften and melt. Even just three deep breaths can make a big difference!
- Take a walk outside. Getting a change of scenery can help to cut the stress cycle. Try to take a five minute walk outside and enjoy the feeling of moving your body and breathing in the fresh air.
- Practice shifting your thoughts. When you start to feel overwhelmed with worry, practice telling yourself something positive like, “Everything will work out just fine,” or “I am going to be okay.” Even if you don’t fully believe this at the time, if you practice the intentional positive thinking for long enough, you will eventually begin to feel more calm and self-assured.



### **Wear the Right Shoes:**

Comfortable shoes can make a big difference for your back. Avoid wearing shoes with high heels at all costs. Instead, choose shoes with good arch support that keep your feet level.



### **Walk Mindfully:**

It's important to protect your back and body by avoiding falls. Try to be mindful when you walk to avoid tripping. Also, if you have to walk on slippery icy surfaces, move slowly and carefully. Consider purchasing shoe grips to help prevent slipping on the ice.



### **Drive Defensively:**

Car accidents can do major damage to your back and even minor fender benders can cause injury. Stay alert and cautious when you are driving. Avoid distractions in the car and never text and drive. Remember to protect yourself and others when you are on the road.



### **Improve Your Balance:**

Improving balance is one of the most important things you can do to help prevent trips and falls. And practicing balance is also great for increasing core strength. Try to remember to practice balancing on one leg three times a day. Perhaps while standing and pumping gas, or brushing your teeth at night. Make it a game with yourself to see how often you can remember to balance.

As you stand on one foot, keep the belly drawing inward and the core engaged. Try to stand up nice and tall and avoid “sagging” into your standing leg hip.

Don't have any balance? Don't worry! Balance is one of our most easily retrainable functions. So with just a little bit of practice you can be balancing like a pro!



### **Diet and Nutrition:**

- Drink plenty of water. Your vertebral discs are made mostly of water so it is important to keep them hydrated so they remain supple and strong.
- Avoid foods that cause inflammation (like processed, high-sugar foods).
- Don't smoke. Smoking restricts blood flow to the discs in the spine, which can cause them to crack or rupture. Smoking also reduces the amount of oxygen in the blood which reduces the nourishment to the muscles and tendons in the back.
- Cut back on alcohol intake. Alcohol leads to dehydration and inflammation.



### **Move the Spine in All Six Directions:**

Try to move your spine in all six directions at least once every day. That means:

1. Forward Bend
2. Gentle Back Bend
3. Side Bend Right
4. Side Bend Left
5. Twist Right
6. Twist Left

Try to hold each stretch for several breaths and breathe deeply. There are great examples of these stretches in your Level 1 Video or Companion Manual. Keeping the spine mobile is very important for your back health. Remember - use it or lose it!