



POSTURE

LYING DOWN

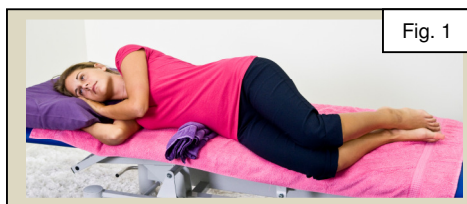
It is important to maintain good posture even when lying down. Good posture helps your body to move more easily and prevent injuries. Often, after prolonged poor posture, your body will have adaptive shortening of the muscles and ligaments, while in other areas you will have lengthening and weakening. Further, you will have developed different, and often incorrect, ways of holding your body. By doing stretching and strengthening exercises you will change these muscles and ligaments so that your body will be in a better position to overcome the bad habits you have developed.

Posture problems can also occur when sleeping as your body is often still. This can cause problems with your discs (between the vertebrae) which are filled with fluid. If you have a spinal problem, sleeping can exaggerate the problem first thing in the morning. Consequently, it is important to do the exercises you have been given when you first wake up. These exercises help squash the fluid into the right position. Interestingly, if you were to measure yourself in the morning, you would find that you are taller than at night.

Additionally, while lying down people often find that their pelvis and lower body are not in alignment, or, when lying on their side, the weight of their top leg causes the muscles to tighten up around the nerves in the buttock. These problems can be overcome by sleeping with a towel rolled lengthways, to fill in the gap under the ribs, Fig. 1 and/or a firm pillow between the knees to lift the leg and take the pressure from the buttock Fig. 2. Some people also find relief when the top knee is straight and the bottom knee is bent.

The following simple hints may help you prevent back or reduce pain while you sleep.

- Sleep with a small rolled up towel around your waist (this helps prevent strain while you sleep), Fig. 1.
- Place a pillow between your knees when lying on your side, Fig. 2, or under your knees when lying on your back.
- Make sure that your mattress is firm - with no sag in it. (Typically you should replace your mattress every 10 years.)



Experiencing neck pain upon waking is often the result of your head resting in an awkward position. For this reason, the type of pillow you use is dependent on the position in which you sleep.

A back sleeper (unless they are too stiff and curved through the trunk) will generally need a lower pillow.

A side sleeper will need a pillow that supports their neck in line with their trunk. A person with wider shoulders will need a higher pillow while those with slimmer shoulders will need a lower pillow. It is important that the chin is not poked too far forwards while sleeping, as this will put extra stress on the tissues. Side sleepers will usually respond better to a raised edge of the pillow; this can be achieved by rolling a small towel, length ways, and placing it under the bottom edge of the pillow (Fig. 3). Alternatively a contour pillow could be used. For more guidance please speak to your PhysioMaxx physiotherapist.



PLEASE NOTE: Initially sleeping with a rolled up towel or contour pillow may cause discomfort, but if you persevere as you will enjoy a better night sleep.