"GOOD POSTURE" IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

A. Flexed/Kyphotic Spine

B. "C" Spine

C. Extended/Lordotic Spine

D. Neutral Spine

Multiple Choice Question:

Above are 4 pictures of a model spine in different positions. Which one illustrates the best "good/proper" posture of a spine?

A. Flexed/ Kyphotic Spine

B. "C" Spine

C. Extended/ Lordotic Spine

D. Neutral Spine

E. None of the above

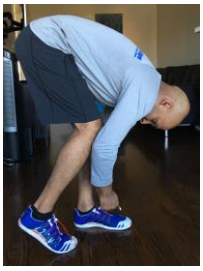
F. All of the above

The answer is "F", all of the above! The most common misconception about "good posture" is the belief "neutral spine" is the best posture.

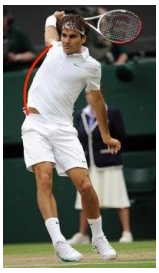
To help better understand the answer, let me first define what posture is. Posture is no more than a position of the spine. As you can see from the pictures above, there are many different postures your spine can do. Good posture is a "dynamic" position. What that means is "good posture" changes depending on what you are doing. When I get asked "what is good posture", my response is, it depends on what you are doing.

Below I have a list of examples of actions in various sports and practical actions we do on a daily basis and the appropriate "proper postures" that go with them.

Flexed/ Kyphotic Spine

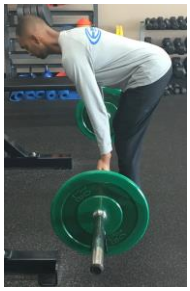


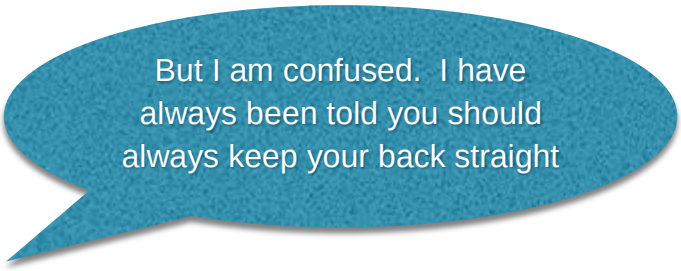
"C" Spine



Extended/ Lordotic Spine

Neutral Spine





Al brings up a great point. You are correct. When LIFTING, the best posture for your spine is straight/ neutral. But that rule is load dependent. What that means is it is ONLY necessary to keep your spine straight/ neutral when you are lifting HEAVY things. Otherwise, it is very healthy and necessary for your spine to flex as you squat. I can assure you when a ball player squats to pick up a ground ball, his/ her spine is not straight but hopefully flexed/ kyphotic. If the ball player's spine was neutral as he/ she is picking up the ground ball, then that would be considered abnormal/ bad posture.

Stop and ask yourself, on a daily basis, how often do you pick up heavy things? The answer for most people is "rarely". Most of our actions in a day involve our spine being curved, not straight. Since most of our actions in sports and activities of daily living do not involve lifting heavy things, we must spend more time making our spine pliable in all directions and less time making it rigid. My criticism is most exercises that are prescribed for the spine focus on keeping our spine straight / neutral. I want you to imagine you are preparing for an exam in which 95% of the material is on the flexed, extended and "C" spine. The remaining 5% of the exam is on neutral spine. What makes more sense? Spending most of your time preparing for the 5% or the 95%. In my opinion, medically, we put way too much emphasis on the 5% (neutral spine).

There is a misconception that a flexed posture is not healthy. In actual fact, if you want a pain free spine, your spine must be able to assume a flexed posture since most of our activities are done in a flexed posture. This applies to even a person with a disc bulge. Just remember, a healthy spine is a pliable spine. It should be able to assume **ALL** postures.

Below are a few examples of exercises that help mobilize your spine in different postures.
If you would like more detail, please visit our website and find videos on how to do each exercise and/or stop by the clinic.

Examples of "Good Posture" Exercises

Remember all these postures are healthy and we need to able to do them all.

Flexed/ Kyphotic Posture:

Reverse Ostrich Matrix (1-4): Start with feet staggered, in a deep squat, with hands flat on the ground in front of you (1). Lean forward, keeping your weight on the balls of the feet, push your butt towards the ceiling (2). Repeat with your hands off to the side (3) and hands rotated to either left or right (4).

Anterior Hanging: With a loose grip overhead, feet fixed behind you, pull your sternum and chin up, towards the ceiling (5). Repeat as above, except fix your hands behind you (6). You should feel a pull in the abdominals and chest.

Extended/ Lordotic Posture:

Upward Facing Dog (7-8): Start in a plank position such that you are pushing the crown of your head forward, and the soles of your feet backward (7). Push your sternum and chin forward and upwards, towards the ceiling as you simultaneously push the soles of the feet backward. You should feel a pull in your abdominals.

"C" Spine:

Side Lean into Wall: Start with your left hand on the wall fixed as high as possible, and right foot crossed over the left foot (9). Push your ribs and left outside thigh towards the wall (10).

Side Dips: Starting position, as illustrated in 11. Push your ribs towards your right elbow.

1/2 Kneeling Quad Stretch: Start with your left foot resting on an elevated surface (13). Raise your left hand towards the ceiling as you push left thigh forward.

Pigeon: See website, for a step by step description.

Neutral Spine: