

How to Walk & Stand Correctly & Pain-free with Neck Pain/Pinched Nerve

Walking is great for the health of all the joints in your body. Walking acts as nature's natural lubricant for your spine (including your neck). Take advantage of your body's ability to heal itself. Walk when able - follow these guidelines:

- 1.** We want you to lead with your chest and build up enough speed so that you are slightly leaning forward. Pick up the pace of your walking and make sure to swing your arms naturally. The movement of your arms can also serve to increase movement, blood flow, and oxygen to your neck. I have had patients who walked with motionless arms. Their muscles look tight, and less healing is occurring.
- 2.** You want to make certain you do not walk too far the first time. You may need to work up to your goal distance. Determine how far you can walk before the pain begins. Start in your house and walk across the room. Try to increase the amount of walking one can do each day before the pain begins. If your pain begins immediately you may need to perform some of the neck stretches for a few days before re-trying the walking. The stretches and improvement in posture can make a significant difference in pain levels.
- 3.** You are taking too long of strides causing a reaction force at your heel which reverberates up your leg and into your spine. The running world has discovered this years ago - They advocate a leaning forward posture with shorter and quicker strides. Less impact on the joints and greater speed and efficiency. Shorten your strides combined with the quicker pace. Try to have your forefoot and your heel hit at nearly the same time. Wear comfortable shoes with adequate cushion and arch support.



Lean forward with shorter strides!

4. You are not breathing (relaxed). The importance of breathing in managing pain, and anxiety is well documented. Breathing is the mainstay of meditation techniques and for controlling pain during labor. Before you start walking take a few deep breaths where you breath in through the nose and out through the mouth. When blowing out, purse your lips like you are blowing out a candle.

Breathing 4-4-4-4: In this exercise there is inhalation, retention, and exhalation, all the same length.

Inhale for 4 steps

Retain the breath for 4 steps

Exhale slowly for 4 steps

Retain empty for 4 steps

You may increase or decrease the number of steps for each phase, according to your capacity. For instance, it could be 3-3-3-3 or 6-6-6-6.

Begin walking and continue relaxed breathing. Good posture will also help assist your breathing.

5. Walk with hands locked in place behind you to help you straighten your posture. Perform a chin tuck at the same time.
6. Calm down any pain makers of the neck. For example, be careful when walking a dog on a leash. The constant or even sporadic pull on the leash by your pet could be causing a torque on your arms and neck resulting in pain. Try walking without your dog and compare it to when you do. If you have increased pain with the pet, you may need to have others take over the dog walking duties until your neck pain calms down.

Standing Guidelines

When standing do not allow your body to settle in. Do not lock your knees. With correct posture your chin, chest, and toes should be in the same vertical line. Do not puff out your chest. Follow these four guidelines:



- a. Unlock knees
- b. Place one foot ahead of another slightly



- c. The Butterfly Exercise. Lock your hands behind your head. Open the wings of the butterfly and spread your elbows apart as far as possible. Level your eyes and tuck your chin in straight back. Put your arms back by your side and hold that position.



- d. You can also stand with your arms locked behind your back to help straighten your posture. Perform a chin tuck at the same time.



e. Sometimes it helps to put one foot forward on a step or ledge. We have patients open the lower cabinet door when doing dishes and placing one foot inside the cabinet.

