

Autumn Series:

9/13-9/22 Perfecting Posture & Connecting to your Powerhouse

9/27-10/6 Breathwork & The Tantalizing Ten!

10/11-10/20 Core & Upper Body Strength

10/25-11/3 Lean Lower Body

11/8-11/17 Finding Your Flexibility

11/29-12/22 Functional Fitness: Beyond the Mat

Check all that apply to what you see in the mirror or know to be true about your body during a typical day:

- ☐ Do you habitually stand with your weight on one leg? Right or left?
- ☐ Do you habitually stand w your weight shifted to one hip? Right or left?
- ☐ Are you knock-kneed or bowlegged?
- ☐ Do you lock or even “Hyper-extend” your knees when you stand?
- ☐ Do you roll in and out on your feet? (Check the heels of your sneakers to see if they wear out on one side more quickly)
- ☐ Are your shoulders rounded forward?
- ☐ Is your chest lifted or concave?
- ☐ Does one shoulder appear higher than another?
- ☐ Is your head habitually tilted in one way? Right or left? Forward or back?
- ☐ Is your back rounded? Upper, middle, lower?
- ☐ Do you have a hollow/arched back when you stand? Upper or lower?
- ☐ Does your tummy protrude?
- ☐ Did you stand taller or correct yourself as you made these assessments?

Accessing the Whole Powerhouse:

Now that you have an idea what specific qualities or challenges your own body has and you can visualize and feel the corrections needed in your powerhouse.

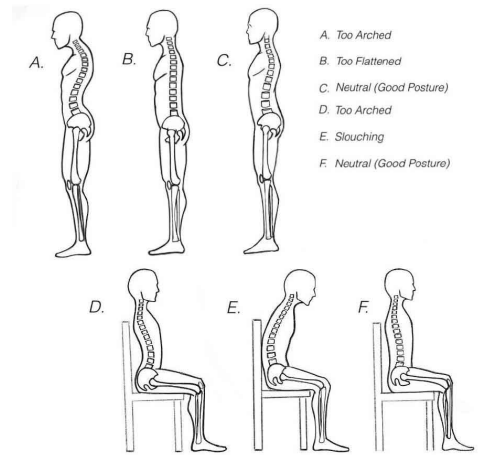
1. Move to the front of your chair and place feet firmly on the floor beneath you, with the whole sole of your foot pressing evenly in the floor w the heels beneath the knees.
2. Pitch your body slightly forward keeping the spine straight from hips through the crown of the head and squeeze butt tightly.
3. Now lift up in your waistline as if being hoisted up by wings separating your ribs from your hips.
4. Imagine pressing the crown of your head through the ceiling and inserting rulers between your bottom ribs and the top of your hip bones.
5. With this image of lifting taller firmly in mind pull your belly in and up, as if filling up your back w the muscles from your front.
6. Try to touch your bottom ribs together inside your body without rounding forward in shoulders.
7. **CHALLENGE:** Stay in this position and practice your side to side *accordion* breathing without changing one iota of your newly perfected form.



How To Find Neutral Spine Position

Knowing how to find the neutral spine position is crucial for doing Pilates exercises correctly.

Neutral spine is the natural position of the spine when all 3 curves of the spine -- cervical (neck), thoracic (middle) and lumbar (lower) -- are present and in good alignment. This is the strongest position for the spine when we are standing or sitting, and the one that we are made to move from.



1. Basic Position

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor. Make sure that your legs are parallel with your heels, toes, knees, and hips all in one line. Let your arms rest at your sides.

2. Relax

Relax your body, including your shoulders, neck, and jaw. Allow your back to rest on the floor, without effort. Your rib cage is dropped with the lower ribs released to the floor as well.

3. Breathe Deeply

Bring your breath all the way into your body, allowing it to move into your back and the sides of your rib cage, and all the way down to the pelvis.

4. Pelvic Tilt

Exhale and use your abs to press your lower spine into the floor in a pelvic tuck.

Inhale to release.

Exhale and pull your lower spine up, away from the floor creating a pelvic tilt.

Inhale to release.

Many people habitually have their spine in one of these two positions, tucked or tilted. To be in neutral spine, you want to be in between these positions, with the lower abs flat and just a slight, natural curve.

5. Balanced Pelvic Placement

Imagine that there is a cup of water sitting on your lower abdomen, just a couple of inches below your belly button. Allow your abdominal muscles to drop in toward your spine, making your belly flatter.

Remember that you don't want the water to spill, so your pelvis cannot be tipped forward or tucked under.

6. Body Scan

You should now be relaxed with your body in a balanced alignment on the floor. Your breath is deep and full, and your abdominals drop toward the floor. The natural curves of the neck and lumbar (lower) spine, however, are away from the floor. Be sure that your lower spine is not pressed into the floor. That would be a pelvic tilt.

7. Balanced Pelvic Placement

Imagine that there is a cup of water sitting on your lower abdomen, just a couple of inches below your belly button. Allow your abdominal muscles to drop in toward your spine, making your belly flatter.

Remember that you don't want the water to spill, so your pelvis cannot be tipped forward or tucked under.