

Should you suck your gut in?

If you pull your stomach in to hide your tummy, then don't do it too often, because holding that posture may upset the muscular support system of your spine.

How? Control of your spine and trunk depends upon muscles working together like a well-practiced team. Some muscles, in particular the diaphragm, have a dual role; they stabilize the spine and internal organs while also acting as an important breathing muscle.

Repeatedly sucking in the gut may upset how the diaphragm muscle works, this can trigger a faulty breathing pattern and with it the loss of spinal support.

Do I breathe properly? A simple test is to look in the mirror and watch what happens when you breathe quietly. During the normal breath-in your stomach should gently move outwards and your lower ribs should expand sideways. There shouldn't be much vertical movement in the chest and shoulders and no sucking in of the gut; if you do then you may have a problem.

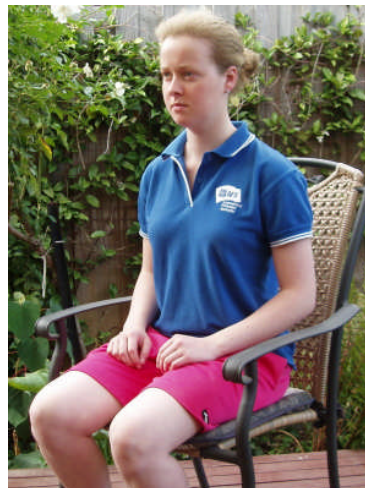


Incorrect – high in chest

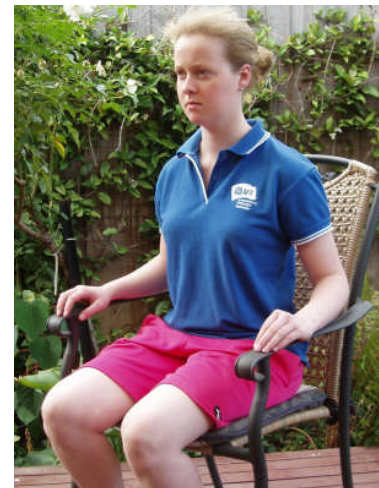


Correct – stomach expands

Not sure? Try again while sitting in a chair with armrests. Compare how it feels when you breathe with your arms unsupported. Breathe again while you gently push your arms downward against the armrest. Do you feel the difference? Using your arms 'turns off' the tight chest and shoulder muscles allowing you to breathe down and into your lower abdomen.



arms unsupported



arms supported

Lying upon the PosturePole can also encourage abdominal breathing by relaxing of the muscles around the neck and shoulders – the very muscles that become overactive if you have a faulty breathing pattern.

If you are unsure about your breathing pattern then it may be wise to seek the advise of a health professional i.e. chiropractor, physiotherapist or specialist, who understands normal body movement.

The 'pearls' are offered as a free service from the professionals at PosturePole to inform people how posture influences their health. While based on clinical experience, the authors can accept no responsibility for the untoward consequences of any person following this advice. Seek professional attention if you have any specific postural or health concerns.