

Salute Your Skeleton



You likely don't pay much mind to your skeleton, but it's always there for you – literally. The skeleton is the base of the musculoskeletal system, the network of muscles, tendons, ligaments, tissue, bones and joints that help you move and maintain form and structure. This system affects your whole body, so keeping it healthy is important.

Some common conditions of the musculoskeletal system include:



Arthritis
(osteoarthritis
and inflammatory)



Back pain



Musculoskeletal injuries
(such as occupational or
physical activity injuries)

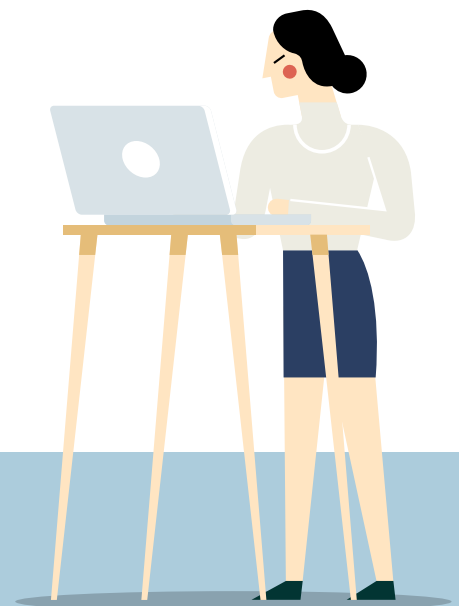


Osteoporosis and
related fractures

Having certain risk factors can make you more likely to develop one of these conditions. Smoking; excess consumption of soft drinks or alcohol; deficient levels of calcium and vitamin D; and inadequate physical activity can all increase your risk.

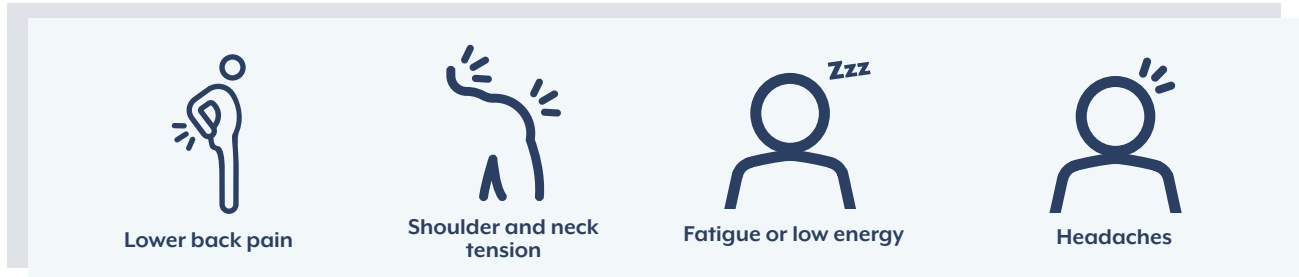
Lifestyle Changes

If you have any of these risk factors, you can make changes in your life to impact your musculoskeletal health. For starters, engage in regular exercise. Cardiovascular, strength, and flexibility exercises can all help if included weekly. Follow a balanced diet and make sure you're getting enough calcium and vitamin D. Moderate your consumption of soda and alcohol.



Ponder Your Posture

Your posture can also affect how your musculoskeletal system feels. Do you regularly experience low energy, back pain or headaches? These can be indicators of bad posture. Good posture is accomplished by having a neutral spine. To do this, the muscles surrounding the spine should be balanced and supporting the body in equal measure. Possible indicators of bad posture include:



Improving posture can bring a myriad of healthy benefits such as improved core strength, decreased wearing down of joints, increased lung capacity, reduced TMJ pain and the appearance of taller height. Additionally, good posture can improve digestion and circulation and create better body form during workouts. Feeling healthier and happier from having good posture can even boost your self-confidence.

Check out these tips for improving your posture during your busy workday:

- **Move** around every 20 to 30 minutes instead of sitting or standing in front of your computer for long periods of time.
- Before or after work, practice bridge **yoga** poses to strengthen your lower back.
- Consider a **standing desk**.
- Practice **head and neck** exercises at your desk to strengthen and stretch your muscles.
- Be aware of your body. Put a **pillow** or some back support in your office chair for extra help, and pay attention to how you sit.
- Sore after work? Use a **foam roller** to alleviate muscle pain.
- Work on your **core** strength. If your core is strong, your body relies on those muscles more, reducing stress on your lower back. Crunches, planks, and subbing your desk chair for a stability ball will all help.

Stay mindful about your musculoskeletal system to keep your whole body in healthy shape as you move through life.

