



4-Week Posture Correction Guide

A physiotherapist-designed program to fix rounded shoulders, forward head posture, and upper back stiffness.

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Why Posture Matters

If you sit at a desk for more than 6 hours a day, your posture is likely already compromised. Forward head posture, rounded shoulders, and a stiff thoracic spine are not just cosmetic issues — they lead to chronic neck pain, headaches, shoulder impingement, and lower back problems.

The good news: posture is largely a muscular problem, and muscles respond to training. With the right exercises done consistently, you can reverse years of postural dysfunction in as little as 4 weeks.

The exercises in this guide are selected from peer-reviewed musculoskeletal rehabilitation research. Each is backed by PubMed-indexed studies — see references on page 7.

How to Use This Guide

- ✓ Perform the exercises 5-6 days per week
- ✓ Each session takes 15-20 minutes
- ✓ Progress from Week 1 to Week 4 sequentially
- ✓ Rest on Day 7 — your body needs recovery
- ✓ Focus on form over speed or reps

What You Will Need

- ✓ A wall (for wall angels and wall slides)
- ✓ A doorway (for chest stretches)
- ✓ A yoga mat or carpeted floor
- ✓ A resistance band (optional, Weeks 3-4)

Safety Note

This guide is designed for general posture improvement. If you have an acute injury, recent surgery, or severe pain, consult your physiotherapist before starting. Stop any exercise that causes sharp or radiating pain.

Week 1 — Foundation

Build awareness and start activating underused postural muscles

1 Chin Tucks

3 sets × 10 reps

Hold 5 seconds

Target: Deep neck flexors

Stand or sit tall. Without tilting your head, pull your chin straight back as if making a "double chin." You should feel a gentle stretch at the base of your skull. Keep your eyes level — do not look down.

Tip: Place two fingers on your chin and push gently backward to feel the correct movement.

Evidence: *Deep cervical flexor retraining improves joint position sense and reduces neck pain [1, 2]*

2 Wall Angels

3 sets × 8 reps

Slow tempo

Target: Lower traps, serratus anterior

Stand with your back flat against a wall, feet 6 inches out. Press your lower back, upper back, and head into the wall. Start with arms at 90° ("goal post"), then slowly slide them up overhead and back down. Keep arms in contact with the wall throughout.

Tip: If you cannot keep your arms on the wall, only go as high as you can while maintaining contact. Range will improve.

Evidence: *Scapular stabilization exercises restore muscle balance in overhead movement [3]*

3 Doorway Chest Stretch

3 × 30 seconds each side

Target: Pectoralis major & minor

Place your forearm vertically on a door frame at shoulder height, elbow at 90°. Step through the doorway with the same-side foot until you feel a stretch across your chest and front of the shoulder. Hold. Switch sides.

Evidence: *Self-stretch via doorway increases pectoralis minor length and improves scapular kinematics [7]*

4 Cat-Cow

2 sets × 10 reps

Target: Spinal mobility

On hands and knees, wrists under shoulders, knees under hips. Inhale: drop belly toward floor, lift chest and tailbone (cow). Exhale: round your spine toward ceiling, tuck chin and tailbone (cat). Move slowly with your breath.

Evidence: *Spinal mobility exercises improve lumbopelvic stability [8]*

WEEK 1 FOCUS

Build the mind-muscle connection. These exercises may feel easy — that is intentional. Master form this week so you can progress safely.

Week 2 — Activation

Strengthen the muscles that hold you upright and increase thoracic mobility

1 Prone Y-T-W Raises

2 sets × 8 reps each position

Target: Lower/mid traps, rhomboids

Lie face down on the floor, forehead resting on a rolled towel. Arms extended. Lift arms into a Y shape (thumbs up), hold 3 seconds, lower. Repeat in T shape (arms out to sides), then W shape (elbows bent at 90°, squeeze shoulder blades).

Tip: Keep movements small and controlled. Think "squeeze the shoulder blades" not "lift the arms."

Evidence: Y-T-W exercises produce optimal scapular stabilizer activation ratios [3, 10]

2 Quadruped Thoracic Rotation

3 sets × 8 each side

Target: Thoracic spine mobility

On hands and knees. Place one hand behind your head. Rotate that elbow down toward the opposite hand, then rotate up toward the ceiling as far as you can. Follow your elbow with your eyes. Keep hips level — all movement comes from the mid-back.

Evidence: Thoracic mobility exercises counteract prolonged sitting effects [5]

3 Dead Bug (Basic)

3 sets × 6 each side

Target: Core stability, anti-extension

Lie on your back, arms straight up toward ceiling, knees bent at 90° with shins parallel to floor. Slowly lower your right arm overhead and left leg toward the floor simultaneously. Return. Alternate sides. Keep your lower back pressed into the floor throughout.

Tip: If your back arches off the floor, you have extended too far. Reduce range of motion.

Evidence: Supine core exercises produce high deep stabilizer activation [6]

4 Wall Slides

3 sets × 10 reps

Target: Scapular upward rotation

Stand with back flat against wall (same position as wall angels). Place forearms flat against the wall, elbows at 90°. Slide arms up the wall as high as you can while keeping forearms and back in contact with wall. Slowly return to start.

Evidence: Wall-based scapular exercises improve upward rotation mechanics [3]

WEEK 2 FOCUS

You should start feeling more "open" through your chest and mid-back. Increase hold times by 5 seconds on stretches if Week 1 exercises feel easy.

Week 3 — Strength

Add resistance and challenge your postural endurance

1 Band Pull-Apart

3 sets × 15 reps

Target: Rear deltoids, rhomboids, mid traps

Hold a resistance band in front of you at shoulder height, arms straight, palms down. Pull the band apart by squeezing your shoulder blades together until the band touches your chest. Slowly return. Keep your shoulders down — do not shrug.

No band? Do prone T-raises (Week 2) with a 2-second hold at the top instead.

Evidence: Resistance training corrects forward head and protracted shoulder posture [4, 10]

2 Prone Cobra Hold

3 × 20-second holds

Target: Thoracic extensors, posterior chain

Lie face down, arms by your sides, palms down. Lift your chest, arms, and forehead off the floor. Rotate your palms outward (thumbs pointing to ceiling), squeeze shoulder blades together. Hold. Keep your chin slightly tucked — do not crane your neck.

Evidence: Prone extension exercises reduce musculoskeletal pain from poor posture [9]

3 Side-Lying Thoracic Opener

3 × 30 seconds each side

Target: Thoracic rotation, chest opening

Lie on your side, knees stacked and bent at 90°. Extend both arms in front of you, palms together. Slowly open the top arm up and over, rotating through your mid-back, until it reaches the floor on the other side (or as far as it goes). Follow your hand with your eyes. Hold and breathe.

Evidence: Thoracic rotation restores mobility lost to sedentary posture [5]

4 Dead Bug (Progression)

3 sets × 8 each side

Target: Core stability under load

Same as Week 2, but now extend opposite arm AND leg fully. Move slower (3 seconds out, 3 seconds back). Your lower back must stay pressed into the floor the entire time.

5 Chin Tucks with Overpressure

3 sets × 10 reps

Hold 5 seconds

Target: Deep neck flexors (strengthening)

Perform a chin tuck as in Week 1. At the end of the tuck, place your fingertips on your chin and apply gentle pressure to push slightly further into the tuck. This adds a strengthening component to the deep neck flexors.

Evidence: Progressive cervical flexor loading enhances training outcomes [1]

WEEK 3 FOCUS

This is the hardest week. Your postural muscles are building endurance. If exercises cause pain (not discomfort), reduce reps or go back to Week 2 variations.

Week 4 — Integration

Combine movements and build habits that stick beyond this program

1 Wall Angel + Hold Combo

3 sets × 8 reps + 10s hold at top

Target: Full scapular control

Perform wall angels as in Week 1, but at the top of each rep, hold for 10 seconds with arms fully extended. Focus on keeping every part of your back, arms, and hands against the wall during the hold.

2 Band Pull-Apart (High + Low)

3 sets × 12 reps each angle

Target: Full posterior shoulder complex

Perform band pull-aparts at shoulder height (12 reps), then immediately do 12 more with the band at forehead height (angled upward). This targets different fibers of the traps and rear deltoids.

No band? Do prone Y-raises with a 3-second hold at top instead.

3 Prone Cobra to Y-Raise Flow

3 sets × 6 reps

Target: Full posterior chain integration

Start in prone cobra position (chest lifted, palms out). From there, sweep your arms forward into a Y-raise, hold 2 seconds, return to cobra, lower. This combines thoracic extension with scapular strengthening in one fluid movement.

4 Cat-Cow to Thread the Needle

2 sets × 8 reps

Target: Spinal + thoracic mobility combo

Perform one rep of cat-cow. From the cow position, thread one arm under your body, lowering your shoulder to the floor and rotating through your mid-back. Hold 3 seconds. Return to cow and repeat to the other side. Alternate with cat-cow between each thread.

5 Deep Squat Hold with Thoracic Rotation

3 × 30-second holds + 5 rotations each side

Target: Full-body postural integration

Drop into a deep squat (heels on floor if possible, or elevated). Hold for 30 seconds. Then place one hand on the floor and rotate the other arm up toward the ceiling, following it with your eyes. Hold 3 seconds. Alternate sides for 5 reps each.

WEEK 4 FOCUS

By now, you should notice visible improvements in your resting posture. These combination exercises build the muscle memory to maintain good posture throughout your day.

Evidence: *Combined resistance and stretching programs produce significant postural improvements within 4-8 weeks [4, 9, 10]*

References

PubMed-indexed studies supporting the exercises in this guide

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About the Author

Caner Özbek is an MSc Sports Physiotherapist and RYS500 Yoga Teacher with over 10 years of clinical experience. He founded Heka° to make evidence-based rehabilitation accessible to everyone through guided exercise programs.

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