

# RESTORING ALTERNATION

IN YOUR DAILY LIFE



## ***“Awareness” of Habitual Patterns of Postural Behavior***

Awareness can be defined as the ‘knowledge or perception of a situation’. Are you aware of how you sit, stand, sleep, eat, walk, breathe and live on a daily basis? Most of these activities are performed unconsciously, meaning that we perform them with relatively little effort or thought, and thus with minimal awareness. Too often, these activities are carried out primarily through the dominant use of one side. You may not see the pattern, because the outside of us usually appears symmetrical. However, if you start to develop curvature of the spine (scoliosis), or a limp when you walk, this dominant pattern becomes more visible. This pattern may become more recognizable after symptoms develop, such as joint pain, headaches, stiffness or fatigue, among others.

We all have two sides, a left one and a right one. We, as humans need awareness of how these two sides cooperatively work together. We all know that we have two eyes, two ears, two shoulders, two hips, two knees, two ankles and two feet. But, do we really have awareness of each one on both sides, or how they work together? When was the last time you ran a vacuum with your left hand? Do you chew your food on only one side of your mouth? Do you tend to favor a dominant leg or foot? What leg do you use more to get out of a chair? What ear do you hold your phone up to when you are talking on the phone? These questions can go on and on, but hopefully they make you think a little more about how aware (or unaware) you are of each side of your body when you perform activities like these.

The human body is not symmetrical. The neurological, circulatory, muscular and visual systems (just to name a few) are not the same on the left side of the body as they are on the right. The Postural Restoration Institute® was established in 2000, to help healthcare and fitness professionals recognize this underlying asymmetry of these systems in our body, and the postural imbalances and patterns associated with dominant, unconscious or conscious overuse, of one side of the body; our right side.

This guide has been put together to help bring awareness to the activities that we all perform regularly in our daily lives. These daily activities often become habitual. These ‘habitual patterns of postural behavior’ are usually associated with a dominant side of our body. On the following pages, we will outline several daily activities which are commonly performed in dominant or patterned positions. This guide provides alternate ways and instruction on how to reduce overuse of patterned muscle, bone and joint working in habitual patterns reflective of dominant behavior. After reading this guide, we hope that you will understand the importance of decreasing the over-dominance of one side of the body, and using both your left and right sides. This integration of both sides of the body is necessary for balanced sitting, standing, sleeping, eating, walking and breathing.

*How do you alternate in your daily life?*



# STANDING

- ✓ Stand on your left leg with your right foot slightly ahead of your left.
- ✓ Shift your left hip back behind your right (rotating through your pelvis and not your trunk).
- ✓ Your left shoulder will be slightly lower than your right.
- ✓ You should feel the majority of your weight on your left foot and heel.
- ✓ If you are holding a child, stand on your left leg with the child in your left arms.
- ✓ If you are carrying a purse or bag, place it on your right shoulder or in your right hand. This causes your body weight to shift to the left to counteract the weight from the bag.
- ✓ If you are wearing a backpack, it is preferable to use both straps across both shoulders, however you can alternate between this and your right shoulder.



For additional activities and recommendations, please visit [www.posturalrestoration.com/pri-resources/pri-living](http://www.posturalrestoration.com/pri-resources/pri-living)



# BREATHING

- ✓ Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth when taking a deep breath or performing PRI non-manual techniques.
- ✓ Focus on allowing your chest wall (especially the right upper and lateral side and left posterior mid-back region) to expand when you inhale.
- ✓ A balloon is a great tool to help facilitate abdominal opposition for the diaphragm during inhalation. Consider blowing up a balloon in these positions, as you keep your tongue up on the roof of your mouth when inhaling.
- ✓ If you are unable to blow up a balloon, try a kazoo, straw, or party favor.



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# NASAL BREATHING

The left nostril is connected and sensed more by the right brain hemisphere and left side of the body, and the right nostril is connected and sensed more by the left brain hemisphere and right side of the body. Our alertness and 'ready-for-action' are provided by the right nostril and left brain (sympathetic). Our calmness, synthesis of information, and sensitivity is provided by the left nostril and right brain (parasympathetic).

We breathe predominantly through one nostril, or the other, at any given time. Because of our normal human body asymmetry and overall lack of alternate lateral movement, many of us develop facial asymmetry that reflects paranasal sinus compression on the left and paranasal sinus expansion on the right. The following recommendations improve nasal cycling and lateral alternation of body movement.

## **PRI Biased Alternate Nostril Breathing for Integrated Calmness**

- ✓ Close the right nostril and gently, slowly and fully inhale through the left nostril.
- ✓ Pause 4 to 5 seconds.
- ✓ Then close the left nostril and exhale gently, slowly and fully through the right nostril.
- ✓ Pause 4 to 5 seconds.
- ✓ Inhale through the right nose.
- ✓ Close the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril.

*\*This completes one cycle. Begin second cycle by gently, slowly and fully inhaling through the left nostril and repeating above cycle. Attempt to complete 6 cycles.*



# SITTING



- ✓ Keep your knees at or above hip level by adjusting the height of the chair or placing a block or books under your feet.
- ✓ Occasionally shift your left knee behind your right knee. You may feel your left inner thigh muscle engage while you are in this position.
- ✓ Occasionally place your left hand on your right knee, so that your trunk rotates to the right. This position may feel unnatural because we so often reach with our right hand, which rotates our trunk to the left.
- ✓ To stand, shift your left hip and knee back and push through your left heel and mid-foot, as you keep your back slightly rounded.
- ✓ If you need additional support, use your left hand to help push you up, while keeping your right hand on your right knee.
- ✓ If you do not need your left hand for additional support, then place your left hand on your right knee, as your right hand is behind you.



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# SITTING

✓ If you prefer to cross your legs, attempt to cross your right leg over your left more often than your left over your right. Again, this will likely feel more unnatural than crossing your left over your right. Your goal is to balance your sense of natural comfort when one leg feels more unnatural to cross.

✓ When sitting on the floor, consider these positions.



*Short seated with your back supported and your knees to your chest.*



*Long seated with your back slightly rounded and your legs straight out in front of you.*



*On your right hip and leg, supporting your upper body with your right arm.*



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# SLEEPING



- ✓ When lying on your left side, place a pillow under your head, a pillow under your left side, and a pillow or two between your knees. Roll or move your right knee and right shoulder forward slightly.
- ✓ When lying on your right side, place a pillow under your head, and a pillow or two between your ankles. Roll or move your left knee and left shoulder back slightly.
- ✓ If you like to read while in bed, we recommend placing pillows behind your upper back and under your knees for support, as tolerated.
- ✓ When lying on your back, place a pillow under your head and a pillow under your knees.
- ✓ Before getting into bed, say your prayers, meditate or read a book in a Long Seated position. If you cannot get into a Long-Seated position, then try kneeling first.

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# WALKING

- ✓ As you begin to walk, take the first step with your right leg, as your right arm swings back.
- ✓ As your left leg advances forward, focus on left heel strike and keep your right palm turned up as your right arm swings forward.
- ✓ When using a single walking or hiking stick, it is preferable to use the stick in your left hand.
- ✓ Advance the left stick forward at the same time you advance your right leg. Keep the stick on the ground for balance as you strike the ground with your heel on the next step.
- ✓ When using two walking or hiking sticks, advance the left stick and arm forward at the same time the right leg moves forward. Then advance the right stick and arm forward at the same time the left leg advances forward.
- ✓ Remain consciously aware of foot & stick contact with the ground.



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# SPEAKING

- ✓ A kazoo is a great instrument to assist with vocal cord vibration, and enhance vocal quality, control and phonation, needed for proper airway pressure and grounded awareness.
- ✓ Also consider humming through a straw for larynx pressure regulation and postural stabilization. Different straws will produce different effects (narrow vs wide, ribbed vs smooth, short vs long).
- ✓ Speak out loud occasionally throughout the day; including, but not limited to talking on the phone, reading to a child, reading instructions, or singing.
- ✓ Pronunciate and articulate words clearly and slowly, using your tongue to do so.
- ✓ Breathe in through your nose after each sentence.
- ✓ Cluck your tongue occasionally if your neck becomes tight while speaking.
- ✓ Stand on your left leg and pick up your right foot as you reach above your head with your right arm.
- ✓ If you are unable to pick up your right leg, then keep your right toes on the ground to help keep your balance, but the majority of your weight should remain on your left leg and foot.
- ✓ Occasionally speak or sing out loud in this position.

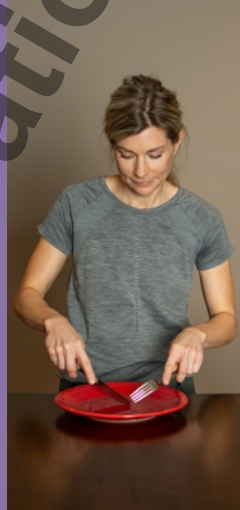


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# EATING

- ✓ Consider chewing and eating while you stand, especially if you are sitting a lot throughout the day. As outlined earlier in this guide, stand with more weight on your left leg, and shift your left leg behind your right. Your left shoulder will be slightly lower than your right.
- ✓ When eating with utensils, we recommend the European style etiquette. Hold the fork (with the tines pointing down) in the left hand and the knife in the right hand.
- ✓ Once a bite-sized piece of food has been cut, bring the fork to your mouth, rather than bringing your head and neck to the food.
- ✓ Alternate food chewing by slowly chewing the food bolus on one side of your mouth, and then the other side 3-4 times each, continue alternating as necessary before swallowing.
- ✓ Whenever possible, use a straw to drink.



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# LIVING

Based on the principles outlined earlier in this guide, consider modifying how you perform daily activities around your home.

- ✓ Stand on your left leg with your right foot ahead of your left and your left hip shifted back, as you reach forward with your left arm, whenever possible.
- ✓ Stay aware of your body alignment over your left hip and ankle as you reach forward with either your left arm or right arm.
- ✓ Keep your knees unlocked when reaching forward with your hands and arms.



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# LIVING

- ✓ Stand on your left leg with your right foot ahead of your left and your left hip shifted back.
- ✓ When putting on makeup, use a handheld or extendable mirror so that you do not have to move your head and neck towards the bathroom mirror.
- ✓ When driving, keep your left knee shifted back behind your right knee, and try not to let your left knee rest on the door. Try placing something like a soft child's pillow behind your right lower back to help position your left hip behind your right.
- ✓ Adjust the seat in the car to accommodate support for your lower back.



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# LIVING

- ✓ When playing with your children, consider these positions (in addition to the seated positions outlined earlier in this guide).



- ✓ When picking up toys or other items off the floor, consider these positions that empower the legs, ankles and arms.



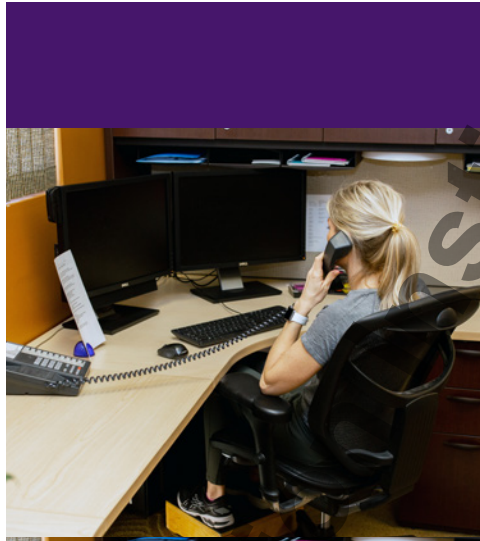
- ✓ When bathing your children, consider kneeling with a towel under the left knee, short sitting on a stool, or fully squatting with support offered by good shoe heel counters.

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# OFFICE

- ✓ Select an office chair that is adjustable (i.e. ability to move the chair up and down, the seat forward and back, the lumbar support up and down, and arm rests up and down).
- ✓ The top of your computer screen should be approximately at eye level.
- ✓ Keep your knees at or slightly above hip level. Place a block under your feet if needed.
- ✓ Keep your phone and any papers you are reading from positioned on your left side.
- ✓ Occasionally use your left hand to hold the phone, and if possible, occasionally try to operate your computer mouse with your left hand.
- ✓ When operating a computer mouse with your right hand, keep your left hand on your thigh, and/or consider raising your right arm rest higher than your left.



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The Postural Restoration Institute® (PRI) was established in 2000 to explore and explain the science of postural adaptations, asymmetrical patterns and the influence of polyarticular chains of muscles. Our mission is based on the development of an innovative treatment that addresses the primary contributions of postural kinematic movement dysfunction.

We are committed to the ongoing search for improved pathways of physical medicine. PRI creates resources, educational opportunities, patient-care programs and research supported practice-based evidence approaches to assist those who wish to maximize their knowledge and skill in respiration, myokinematics, neuromuscular applications and postural imbalances.



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