

Main  
About Us  
Contents  
Calendar  
Advertise  
Links  
Contact Us  
Web Directories

Sports &  
Recreation  
Fitness & Exercise  
◆ Sets & Reps  
◆ Success Story  
◆ Aligned And Ready  
Health & Wellness  
Beauty & Style



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# ALIGNED AND READY

## Follow these innovative tips for better posture and health.

By Teresa Tapp

Ever notice how shoulders seem to "slope" as we age? Notice how "back fat" seems to appear after age 30? And women, have you noticed how that pesky area between our chest and armpit seems to "pudge" after age 25? Well, I'm here to inform you that you can easily reverse or prevent these areas of concern just by focusing on shoulder alignment.

When you look at any anatomy/physiology textbook, you will see that the human body is positioned with arms at side and palms forward. This is considered correct anatomical position. However, most people stand with palms facing backward (as shown in photo A), which causes the shoulder joint to roll forward and makes the upper spinal column curve forward. As we age, this becomes more apparent and creates an imbalance in muscle strength, not only along the vertebrae and shoulder joint but also in the compression of internal organs. This creates an increased risk for back and/or shoulder injury and organ compression contributes to the development of the lower abdominal "pouch."

For 18 years I worked in the fashion industry as a "new face developer" teaching young women catalogue, runway and editorial modeling techniques. One of the most important techniques I taught was shoulder rotation to create a square shoulder (illusionary shoulder pads) so that clothes "hang" better on the body. You can easily learn this and implement it daily while standing, walking, or sitting.

Examine your regular stance in a mirror. Depending on age, or anatomical structure, past injuries, etc., most of you will notice a



slight sloping from your neck to shoulder. See how the palms of your hands face backward? Now assume the T-Tapp stance (toes forward, feet hip width apart with knees pushing out to the little toe "KLT" and buns tucked) and do a couple of shoulder rolls backward, then repeat the shoulder rolls with palms forward and fingers extended. Feel the difference?

Now examine your appearance while maintaining your body's position after the shoulder rolls with palms forward. See the immediate difference in the angle of your neck and shoulder? You should also feel increased intensity of muscle between your shoulder blades as well as in front of your shoulders/pectoral muscles. During shoulder rolls, concentrate on keeping fingers extended isometrically with thumbs pointing as far back as possible.

It's important to keep your lower body isometrically isolated with buns tucked and knees in the "KLT" position. This will enhance neuro-kinetic flow, increase circulation and burn glucose at a higher rate (as well as firm the glutes). This position will enable you to establish "spinal heat" quicker and with greater intensity. Finally, lift the shoulders as high and back as possible during movement with elbow position pulling back (as shown in photos B and C).

Repeat three shoulder rolls with isolated lower body position as explained, but lock shoulders after third roll and contract your "lats". Hold this position (do not move shoulder to elbow) and twist the wrist so your palms face to the center of your body so that you see the side of your hand (thumb and forefinger should form a "V"). Even though this feels unnatural, your stance will appear natural, and eventually, you'll be able to do it automatically once you achieve correct upper body positioning. Practice in front of a mirror using different lower body positions and soon it will feel natural.

Maintaining correct shoulder rotation is an easy way to isometrically work your back and shoulder muscles, as well as your stomach, throughout the day (which burns glucose). Your posture will also improve and you'll be able to prevent "back fat" from accumulating between your shoulder blades and the base of the neck (common in shorter torso women). The real trick is



to apply this while sitting at a computer or while driving a car, but you can.

For extra abdominal work, concentrate on keeping your shoulders not only rotated back, but also in alignment with your hip joints (compare alignment in photos A and D). For example: use this technique during reverse sit-ups. Place hands on rib cage with elbows touching the floor and legs up in the air (knees slightly bent). Push elbows into the ground as you use abdominal muscles to reverse "crunch" causing legs/buns to lift "up."

Try applying correct shoulder rotation during your personal exercise program. You can download and learn all 14 T-Tapp movements at no charge at [www.t-tapp.com](http://www.t-tapp.com). Discover the difference shoulder rotation and linear alignment makes immediately.

Want more? I'll be speaking at the University of Houston in March 2002. Check <http://www.healthandfitness.com/> for date/time confirmation for free seminar, clinics and workshops.

*-Teresa Tapp is the creator of the T-Tapp Total Workout.*



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