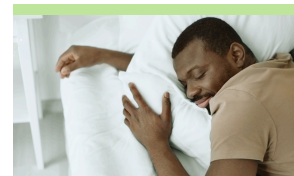




ALIGNED IN THE STILLNESS

BY KELLY TREVIÑO, MS, LAT, ATC

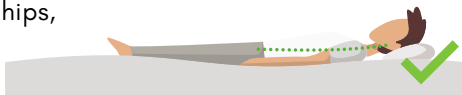
You're asleep. Your muscles are off-duty and nothing's in motion. At least, that's the idea. But while you're out cold, your body might be stuck in patterns that keep tension alive, like twisted hips, tilted shoulders, and a spine shaped like a question mark. At Work Right, we talk a lot about alignment in movement, but alignment in the stillness matters just as much. Because if your body spends eight hours in the wrong shape, it doesn't matter how well you lift the next day. You may already be starting behind.



THE BEST POSITION FOR SLEEP

We spend about a third of our lives lying down. Ideally, this time helps restore alignment and neutrality to our bodies. But, if our sleeping position works against that, we're reinforcing misalignment night after night.

According to the [Sleep Foundation](#), side sleeping is the most common position, but without proper support, it can contribute to low back pain. Stomach sleeping (prone) has the highest prevalence of discomfort due to spinal overextension. *The best positions for alignment?* Sleeping on your back with a pillow under the knees, or on your side with a pillow between the knees and adequate head support. Both promote a neutral spine and reduce strain across the shoulders, hips, and lower back.



POORLY POSITIONED FOR WORK

Misalignment while sleeping isn't just a comfort issue, it can have far reaching ripple effects. Research from [Hopkins Medicine](#) links poor sleep quality to increased risks for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cognitive decline.




For industrial athletes, the impact can be more immediate. Poor sleep posture can lead to fatigue, slower reaction time, reduced focus, and a higher risk of mistakes or injuries on the job. If you're waking up sore or foggy, your body may be paying the price for poor positioning.

PREVENTION FAVORS THE PREPARED

Sleep is personal. There's no single "right" position for everyone. But there are better habits that support musculoskeletal alignment and help your body recover overnight. The use of pillows, mattress firmness, and body awareness all play a role.

A 2023 study in *Musculoskeletal Science and Practice* found that sleep posture is a [contributing factor](#) in chronic low back pain. And, research published in *Ergonomics* suggests that [mattress sagging](#) can disrupt spinal alignment and worsen discomfort, especially for side and stomach sleepers.

As we focus this month on Aligning Our Shoulders, Hips, and Toes, remember, *how we sleep is just as important as how you move*. You don't need a perfect setup. You just need to give your body the chance to rest in a position that helps it recover, not unravel. 

SLEEP ALIGNMENT CHECKLIST

- Pillow supports my neck (not just my head)
- Side sleeper: pillow between knees
- Back sleeper: pillow under knees
- Stomach sleeping? Avoid or shift to side/back
- Mattress isn't sagging beneath hips or shoulders
- Sleeping position supports spine alignment
- Bonus:* side sleeping reduces heartburn & snoring
- Bonus:* back sleeping helps with nasal congestion



Kelly Treviño, MS, LAT, ATC || Kelly has been practicing athletic training since 2018. She currently lives in Rio Rancho, NM with her wife, Shelby, and two dogs, Harvey and Storm. In her free time she enjoys Legos, working out, and going for rides on her motorcycle.



Work Right is changing the way that companies view workplace hazards. Our focus is on educating the workforce to prevent injury. We provide access to Injury Prevention Specialists in the workplace to address the early signs of discomfort. We are changing the industry one company at a time by helping one person at a time.