

Persnickety Posture Tips

“I don't know where my road is going, but I know that I walk better when I hold your hand.”

— Alfred de Musset



Such sweet tenderness to hold a beloved's hand.

In the *yogic* tradition, bringing our palms to touch is holding ourselves as the beloved.

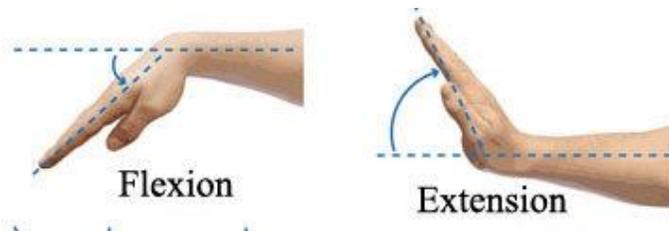
It extends outward, to honour those in our presence.

The sensation of fingertips on mat lets us know where we are in space and so much more: it is supportive, sensory and expressive. It is a physical element capable of altering our posture practice when we are alive to its essence and contribution.

Let's get started

This [Tip](#) discusses building strength and attention in your practice by using the fingertips in select postures. Feel free to incorporate or ignore. Trust your own judgment and intuition.

When you come to your mat you will benefit tremendously by “checking in” with your body, including the joints, to understand where you are at that day. When it comes to the wrist, give it a few swirls, maybe a gentle stretch in flexion and extension to see how it feels (there is a major network of muscles and connective tissue, as well as nerves and blood flow, that moves through the wrist joint). Also keep in mind the health of the forearm, including the elbow joint. If the latter is not operating at capacity, chances are the hand and wrist will be called upon to compensate.



If you have ever experienced a hand or wrist injury, you know the impact it can have: can't carry a heavy (or even light) grocery bag; hurts to brush your hair or teeth; accidentally put weight on it and it's excruciating. The point is, our hand and wrist are integral to everyday activities. If your yoga practice involves a typical vinyasa of plank, chatarunga dandasana (or just coming to the floor), upward dog and downward dog, you understand the crucial role a

healthy hand and wrist plays. With this in mind, at Sweet Kula Yoga we have two rules we ask you to abide by: 1. Have fun; and 2. Be safe. Specific to this discussion, yoga can be used intentionally to gain awareness and strength of the hand and wrist (safety part) while honing your attention to the intricacies of the wrist, palm and fingertips.

Let's keep it simple

The weight of the body should not land on the palm or wrist (see photo 1). Makes sense, right? Instead of compressing into the palm and wrist, why not use the fingertips whenever possible? Some examples are Runner's Lunge and it's twisting variation. Or a low twist, with the back knee on the floor. To place our hands on the fingertips strengthens the hand itself and requires use of extremities and core for weight-bearing and stability, avoiding compression into the hand and wrist (See photo 2).



1 Body weight compressed into hand and wrist



2 Using fingertips to build hand strength and avoid joint compression

The plethora of muscles and ligaments in the hand and forearm that move and stabilize the many bones involved are the benefactors of using the fingertip placement, as are the feet, legs and core, when they're doing the work suggested earlier.

Let's consider posture transitions

With the palm or fingertips on the floor, a transition sometimes results in more weight-bearing. When the palm is down, it's more likely the wrist will experience additional compression. On the other hand (haha), if on the fingertips, the body will instinctively use those larger muscles (feet, legs, core) to assist during transition. Of course, the only way to know is to pay close attention during transitions (rule 2 applies here).

This is a transition I incorporate because it intensifies the sensation of the palm rooting into the earth in downward facing dog. Experience with your fingertip practice is a must prior to trying this (double-click on image for video):



Don't forget about Urdhva Dhanurasana (upward facing bow)

This advanced backbend requires intense extension of the wrist and forearm. If it's a posture you're interested in, the wrists and forearms should be really warm, especially if you have tight shoulders, chest and upper back.



Namaste