

## Touch Your Toes With More Comfort and Ease

This awareness exercise is designed to help you experience how the position of your skeleton can either hinder or improve the effectiveness and comfort of your movement.

Now let's see how the position of your skeleton can determine how hard—or how easy—it is to tie your shoes.

**Equipment needed:** a chair or bench

- 1 Sit on a chair or bench with your feet flat on the floor, a comfortable distance apart.

Make sure that your knees are as far apart as your feet.

- 2 If necessary, loosen the clothing around your waist.

- 3 Reach toward your foot with one hand and then come back up to your original position.

Did you round your back, caving in your chest?  
Or, did you bend forward from your hip joints?

*To discover whether you rounded your back or bent forward through your hip joints, continue with the following steps.*

- 4 Put the fingertips of one hand in the fold where your leg connects to the rest of your body. Then, with your fingertips still in the fold, bend forward and reach for your foot with the other hand.

If you round your back, some space remains there when you reach for your toes.

However, if you bend over by folding through your hip joints, that space closes up.

- 5 Reach for your foot by intentionally rounding your back. (This is what many people do every time they bend over to touch their toes.)

What is the distance from your fingertips to your toes?

Do you feel discomfort in your lower back?

- 6 Now reach for your foot again. But this time, fold forward where your legs are ball-and-socketed to your pelvis and let your back lengthen instead of round.

Now what is the distance from your fingertips to your toes?

- 7 Alternate between Step 5 and Step 6.

Which way allows your fingertips to get closer to your toes?

Which way is more comfortable for your lower back and neck?



### Explanation:

When you round your spine to touch your toes:

The lower half of your spine actually goes backward.

The bending forward happens in the upper back.

Rounding your upper spine to touch your toes is not only inefficient; it can cause pain in your lower back.

When, instead of rounding your back you fold forward through your hip joints as you bend to touch your toes:

The top of your hipbones and the top of your sacrum (the center back of your pelvis) tilt forward.

Your whole spine tilts forward instead of just the top half of your spine curving like a hook.



As you experiment with the awareness exercises in *Stop Sciatica Now*, you will discover that skeletal awareness can make you more comfortable and your movements more efficient. You will also discover that it takes no more effort to move with skeletal awareness than it does to mindlessly drag your bones and their connecting joints.

The fact is, in the split-second before you make any move, there is a moment where you subconsciously decide **how** you are going to move. This book will help you bring that split-second decision to the conscious level, so that you can move more effectively and won't damage your joints and the nerves that thread through those joints.