

## CORSET VS PELVIC TILT: TO TUCK OR NOT TO TUCK THE TAILBONE UNDER

The lumbar (lower back) curve helps to distribute the weight of the spine and other structures connected to it within the gravitational pull. Some of us have more pronounced lumbar curves, and some less pronounced. The degree of the curve reflects how much your pelvis is tilted forward.

Imagine as if you are holding a bucket of water. On the inhale tip the bucket forward, on the exhale tip the bucket backward - this shows the degree of the anterior (forward) and posterior (backward) pelvic tilt. The range of movement here will differ from person to person, so you will end up somewhere on the spectrum between the tin man and a noodle. The extremes of that spectrum are not preferable – you need to be both stable and mobile.

There are two main ways to approach and develop a healthy relationship between the pelvis and spine – “The Pelvic Tilt” and “The Corset”.



**The Pelvic Tilt** means using progressive abdominal contraction to tip the top of the pelvis backward, causing the tailbone to tuck under. The pelvic tilt is used to bring awareness to the position of the pelvis, as well as develop and maintain *mobility* in the lumbar spine. It can be done in supine, kneeling, or standing position.

**Supine:** lie on your back with your knees bent. On exhalation, pull the navel in toward the spine – this will tilt your pelvis backward. We do that to increase general awareness of the movement of the pelvis, learn how to move the pelvis by contracting the abdomen, not the butt muscles; demonstrate the relationship between the muscles of the abdomen and muscles of the back; and practice progressive abdominal contraction on the exhalation.

**Kneeling:** in Cat-Cow pull the belly button in toward the spine on the exhale. This will result in your tailbone tucking under. The goal is to alternate contracting and stretching of the lower back muscles. This kind of spinal flexion is fine, as long as you focus on lifting the chest on the inhalation (rather than overarching the lower back) and on progressive abdominal contraction on the exhalation (rather than tensing the glutes).

**Standing:** in Virabhadrasana 1 progressively contract your abdomen and tuck the tailbone slightly. This will help you become more aware of the relationship between the pelvis, abdomen, and spine, as well as get a better stretch in the hip flexors.



**The Corset** means hugging the waist in toward the center as if you were tightening an invisible corset around your torso. It is a similar action of progressive abdominal contraction, but here no visible change occurs in the position of your pelvis, and the lower back remains neutral. This is a preferable method for creating and maintaining *stability* in your core and is useful in any yoga posture. For example in Utkatasana instead of tucking the tailbone under you would focus on hugging the waist in all around so that you maintain your natural lower back curve and create support for your lumbar spine. The “corset action” helps to position your pelvis properly.

To help newcomers grasp and feel the corset action we usually do it in three stages:

1. Create awareness of the abdominal contraction with the pelvic tilt.
2. Create awareness of the abdominal contraction without the tilt.
3. Use abdominal contraction with every exhalation during practice (with or without the tilt depending on the posture).