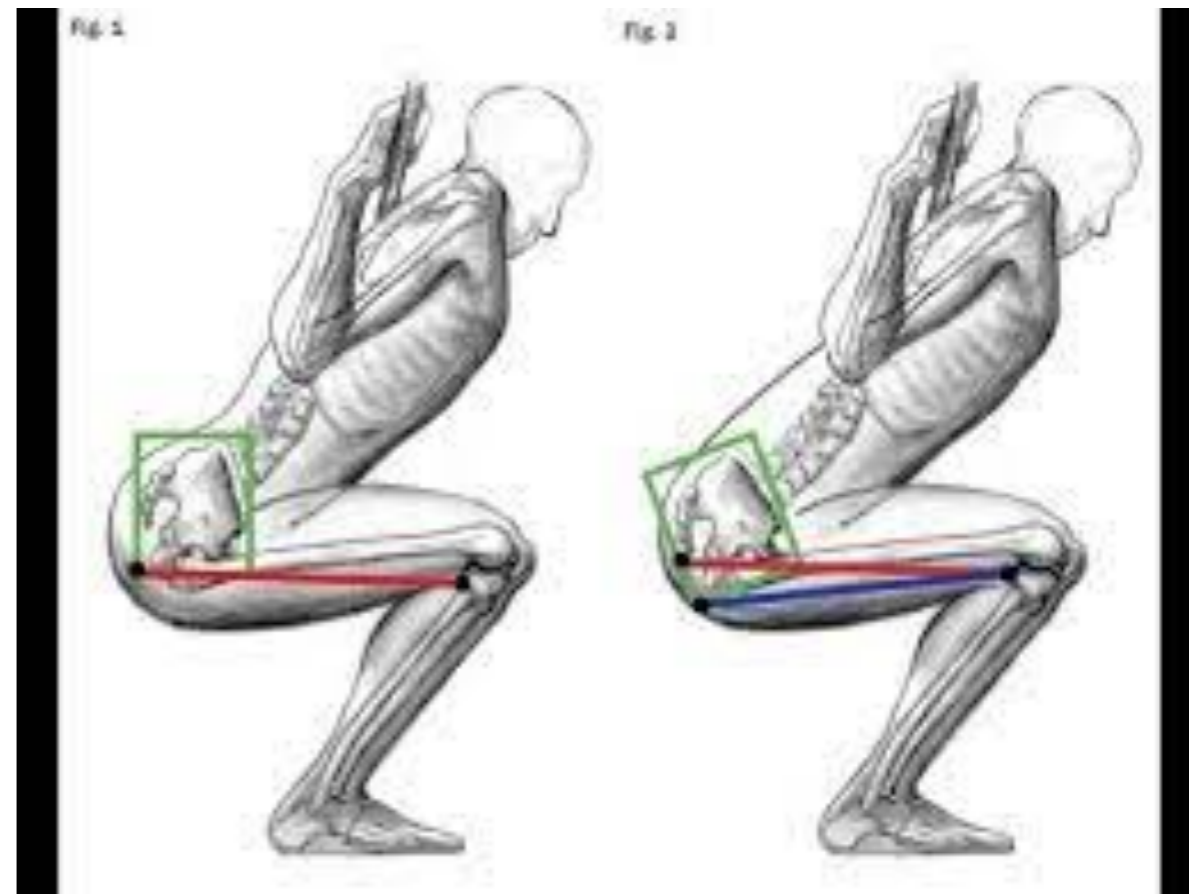


What is Butt Wink? Is Spinal Flexion Bad?



Know Your Joints Muscle and Joint Care Suggestions

SUMMARY: Spinal flexion is not bad. It is a natural motion that your spine should go through daily. What I suggest is problematic is placing the spine under excessive load when in a flexed position. Some people who lift with squats and deadlifts are unaware that they are going into spinal flexion in the lowest part of their lifts. This motion has been termed Butt Wink. I have seen many young people injure their backs with excessive loads with spinal flexion. In that case we change form and condition the body to prevent it from happening. Read on for more details.



There has been a couple of blogs and YouTube saying that lumbar spinal flexion and the Butt Wink is not bad ([example](#)). They go on to state that there is spinal flexion not matter what you do when squatting and that it is normal and you should not worry about it. I think these statements are dangerous. I do agree that in life you can have spine flexion and that some flexion is a way for the spinal discs to get nourishment. I do several body weight exercises, motions, and stretches that places the spine into flexion. I do not agree with placing the spine under **external load or strain** while in flexion. Maintaining the spine's natural curve is very important when lifting. It is a major tenet in strength and conditioning. Many studies support keeping a neutral spine when you lift especially doing weighted squats and deadlifts. I agree that some flexion motion may occur that is not visible to you, but trying to prevent it from happening by engaging your musculature to keep the spine in what appears to be neutral while lifting will protect the spine. One of the reasons is that when the spine flexes the muscles in the spine relaxes (flexion relaxation phenomenon), which places the stress on the non-contractile tissue like the discs and ligaments. Another important reason is that the spine can withstand the most compressive load when in neutral. When you look at mostly all great powerlifter or Olympic lifter they maintain what appears to be a neutral spine. I also have never heard an ergonomist or safety specialist recommend lifting with a flexed spine. So when doing squats or deadlifts keep the spine in neutral. I go one step more I tell all my clients when doing any lift to Protect the Spinal Curves. In other words keep the natural curves at your neck, thoracic, and lower back by looking straight ahead, keeping shoulders back, and abdomen braced (tighten your abdomen, engage the central core) when doing mostly all forms of resistance training. Example when doing a standing curl or shoulder presses engage your core and look straight ahead. (See [Video](#) and [Article](#)). See this excellent article that breaks it down in detail ([Article](#)).

A Butt Wink is a term used to describe poor body biomechanics and posture of a squatting position; when your pelvis goes into a “posterior pelvic tilt” at the bottom of a squat. Having a flexed lumbar spine and posterior pelvic tilt at the end of a squat or deadlift puts too much pressure on your discs and vertebrae, which can lead to conditions such as a bulged disc (strain), muscle or facet joint strain where the joints between your vertebrae are damaged.

MORE INFO WHY TO KEEP A RIGID SPINE WHEN TRAINING AT TIMES: The main function of the core is to stop or distribute motion, not start motion, in other words the core transfers force/power from the legs to the arms and vice versa. An example is the leg push off from a pitcher to the ball or a golf swing from the legs to the club. The core transfers forces. It does it through a rigid rod, not a pliable one. The rod is at its most rigid when it is in a neutral position since the musculature around it can be engaged. **YOU FIX BUTT WINK:** Some feel that Butt Wink can be trained away. This may be the case by increasing ankle mobility, developing the core, and improving lifting form. It may not be the case if someone does not have the hip architecture that will allow a deep squat without spinal flexion. If you think that you Butt Wink we can maybe help you with your form and determine if your hips are preventing you from going into a deep squat. Remember some Butt Wink is normal and moving in and out of it is natural, but lifting with heavy weights in and out of it may be problematic and I would highly suggest not to.

