

## Normal resting position

The resting position of a normal, healthy joint is relatively consistent within a single individual. We call this the “normal resting position” for that individual.

The normal resting position is similar among most people, however it can vary considerably. For example, in most people the normal resting position of the wrist is in slight palmar flexion, however some people display a normal resting position in slight dorsal flexion. The manual therapist cannot assume that the normal resting position is in a certain place. The therapist must examine each joint manually to determine the normal resting position for that joint.

An individual’s normal joint resting position can vary somewhat from moment to moment and from day to day. Therefore, the manual therapist must frequently reassess the resting position to achieve accurate and effective examination and treatment.

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*Joint play is easiest to palpate in the joint’s normal resting position where the joint capsule, ligaments, and muscles are most lax.*

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## Momentary resting position <sup>1</sup>

In the presence of pathological changes or pain, an individual’s joint resting position may vary considerably from the normal resting position. We call this the “momentary resting position.”

The momentary resting position is used in the same way and for the same purposes as the normal resting position, both for evaluation and treatment.

The therapist determines the momentary resting position with the same techniques used for finding the normal resting position, except that in the presence of pain, the therapist may only be able to explore positions where the patient reports least discomfort. The momentary resting position generally displays less ease and range compared with the normal resting position.

Careful observation of the patient’s habitual or antalgic posture may provide an approximate regional posture from which to begin exploration of the momentary resting position.

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<sup>1</sup> In earlier editions the momentary resting position was called the “actual resting position.” The term “actual resting position” continues in use in some countries.