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Good Posture – The Affordable Head to Toe Makeover!

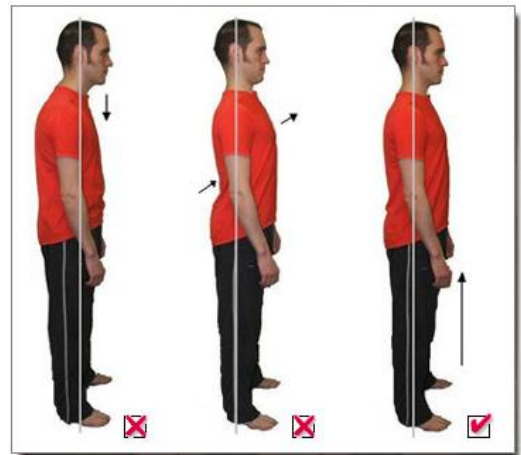
Nothing is more important than good posture to prevent aches and pains. Good posture can make you look taller, slimmer and more confident and help speed recovery from low-back pain and prevent its recurrence.

What Is Good Posture?

Standing with your chest out and shoulders back is not good posture. This military stance exaggerates the forward curve in the lower back and can lead to swayback, which puts stress in the lumbar area of your spine and can cause disc herniation and sciatic pain.

Good posture is standing with your head over your shoulders, which should not be thrown back. There should be a natural curve to your lower back; your pelvis should be level; and your abdomen should be pulled in. Your knees should be straightened, but not locked and your weight should be equally distributed on both legs. Two natural curves in your spine, from the base of your head to your shoulders and from your upper back to the base of your spine need to be maintained.

To check the natural curve of your spine, stand with your back, head, shoulders, buttocks and heels flat against the wall. There should be enough room for you to slide your fingers between your mid-back and the wall, but there shouldn't be enough room for you to move your entire hand through.



A Few Things You Can Do

Be adjusted regularly – If you've had poor posture your entire life, it can be difficult to determine what correct posture is, and to maintain it. **Ask me to evaluate your posture** during your next visit and subsequent visits. Together, we will develop a plan of action and check your progress with a postural analysis. Before long, as practice becomes habit, you won't have to remind yourself to maintain correct posture - it will become second nature!

Wear Orthotics - Slight differences in the arches of your feet can cause a chain reaction all the way up your spine, affecting your posture and leading to tight muscles, stiffness and joint degeneration in the knees, hips and spine. If your posture is breaking down as a result of improper foot balance, wearing custom-made shoe orthotics will create a solid foundation for your pelvis and spine and help improve your posture.

Be aware of your posture- The more familiar you are with proper alignment, the easier it is to maintain.

- ✓ Take steps of equal length and walk heel-to-toe. Bend your knees and swing your arms naturally at your sides.
- ✓ Sit properly with your bottom planted squarely on the seat, and your abs pulled in to help keep your lower back straight. Your feet should be flat on the floor. Avoid slouching, leaning forward or crossing your legs, which can also lead to varicose veins.
- ✓ Always hold a phone receiver with your hand, do not by cradle it between your neck and shoulder.

Stretch –

- ✓ Stretch your chest. Face a wall and lift one arm up at a right angle against the wall, turn your body away while your arm is still against the wall and feel the stretch across your chest. Hold for a few moments and switch sides.
- ✓ Stretch your hamstrings. Sitting shortens these muscles, causing tension in the lower back and weakened abdominal muscles.
- ✓ Strengthen your back muscles. Hold your arms in front of you, with your hands in loose fists. Pull back and squeeze the shoulder blades together.

Give yourself a break- Take periodic breaks throughout the day and assume a completely different position. If you work at a desk, get up and walk every couple of hours. If you are on your feet all day, take a break to sit down. Don't carry a heavy bag over one shoulder. Instead, find a good fitting, double-strapped backpack and be careful not to overload it.

Set up your workstation properly-

- ✓ Invest in a good ergonomic chair that is properly sized for you, with the lumbar support slightly below your waist line.
- ✓ Adjust the height of your chair so your feet can rest completely on the floor.
- ✓ Allow 1-3 inches between the edge of the seat and the back of your knees.
- ✓ Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees while your feet are flat on the floor.
- ✓ Keep your feet flat on the floor, but move them around often. Use a foot rest if you have one, but only part of the time. Do NOT cross your ankles.
- ✓ Lean back slightly, making sure your chair back will support your shoulders at this angle while still providing good lumbar support. Leaning back 100-130 degrees from parallel to the floor will open up the hips and ease pressure on the pelvis.



- ✓ Hold your head slightly up; roughly perpendicular to the floor. The top of your monitor should be at eye level.
- ✓ Rest your lower arms on the arm rests of your chair, parallel to the floor.
- ✓ Keep your wrists straight.
- ✓ Change your position frequently. Move your feet, lift your arms, adjust your hips, and subtly alter your posture.

Trade your office chair for an exercise ball-

Sitting on an exercise ball, your body is constantly making small adjustments with the postural muscles, abdominals, gluteals and leg muscles. It is "active sitting". To get a good core workout by "actively sitting":

- ✓ Put your feet flat on the floor.
- ✓ Sit as tall as you can.
- ✓ Straighten your back.
- ✓ Puff out your chest.
- ✓ Pull in your chin slightly.
- ✓ Push your shoulders down.
- ✓ Move your shoulder blades closer together.



Notice how your body feels. Can you feel all the different muscles working? The more you practice active sitting, the easier it will become.

Always check your posture. Slumping on the ball is even worse than slumping on a chair, since you don't have lower back support.

If you decide to sit on an exercise ball at work, keep in mind these safety issues.

The ball isn't a good choice for you if you:

- ✓ Suffer from balance issues.
- ✓ Have osteoporosis.
- ✓ Already have lower back pain.

Check out your office space. Do you have space for a ball and a chair? You will need to have a good chair to use for most of your workday until you get accustomed to sitting on a ball. The ball is a safety hazard if you're constantly stepping over or around it, so make sure you have space to tuck the ball away when it is not in use. Make sure your ball is burst resistant. Double-check by reading the box. Finally, make sure you have the right size ball. Your knees should be slightly lower than your hips, when you sit on the ball. Sitting on a ball that is too small or too large may affect your balance and ability to sit safely.

Avoid wearing high heels- High-heeled shoes unnaturally place the heels above the toes and can throw off your body's entire alignment. The spine has specially designed curves that evenly distribute your weight. High heels alter these curves, and place uneven wear on the discs, the joints, and the ligaments of the back.

Did You Know?

by Dr. Dan Murphy

- 1,000 capsules of Tylenol in a lifetime doubles the risk of end stage renal disease. (New England Journal of Medicine, 1994)
- The average time for a whiplash-injured patient to achieve maximum improvement is 7 months, 1 week. (Spine, 1994)
- Taking the correct drug for the correct diagnoses in the correct dose will kill about 106,000 Americans per year, making it the 4th most common cause of death in the US. (Journal of the American Medical Association, 1998)
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for rheumatoid and/or osteoarthritis conservatively cause 16,500 Americans to bleed to death each year, making that the 15th most common cause of death in the US. (New England Journal of Medicine, 1999)
- Glutamate or MSG (a flavor enhancer in soups, salad dressings, chips, frozen entrees, and restaurant food) and aspartame (Equal, Nutrasweet) can cause chronic pain sensitization, and removing them from the diet for 4 consecutive months can eliminate all chronic pain symptoms. (Annals of Pharmacotherapy, 2002)
- Chiropractic spinal adjusting has been shown to be better than 5 times more effective than the NSAIDs, pain drugs, Celebrex and Vioxx in the treatment of chronic neck and low back pain. (Spine, 2003)
- In patients suffering from chronic pain subsequent to degenerative spinal disease, 59% can eliminate the need for pain drugs by consuming adequate levels of **omega-3 essential fatty acids**. (Surgical Neurology, 2006)
- Supplementing with **vitamin D3** has the potential to reduce cancer deaths in America by 75%. (Ann of Epidemiology, 2009)
- The estimated incidence of chronic pain from whiplash trauma is 15-40%. (Jour of the Am Academy of Ortho Surg, 2007)