

Topic of the Week

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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Postural Imbalances: Bad Posture Has Dramatic Impact

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Do you remember your mother reminding you to “stand up straight, and don’t slouch”?

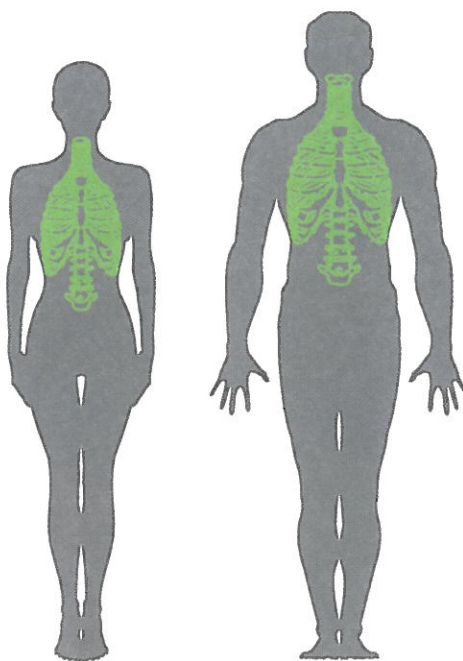
You may have been annoyed by her nagging, but Mom knew what she was talking about. Forward head posture is one of the leading causes of pain in the neck and shoulders.^{1,2} Over the years, gradual changes to body position can slowly wear away at joints and surrounding soft tissues. Chronic pain syndromes, headaches and TMJ issues may appear if arthritic changes progress and postural alterations remain uncorrected.³

Recently, research has shown that not only can faulty posture be a pain in the neck, but the effects of poor posture can also pose significant health risks to many other systems in the body, specifically the respiratory, circulatory and digestive systems.⁴

The chiropractic adjustment is very effective in reducing the pain caused by joint restriction and malposition (vertebral subluxation). However, if poor posture is the cause of these subluxations, the symptoms are likely to recur if your posture is not corrected.⁵ Your chiropractor encourages you to pay attention to this very important issue related to your spine.

What is Ideal Posture?

Posture is the way your body is held in space - whether standing, sitting or lying down. If your body has proper posture, there is a perfect balance to your physical structures. And you’re able to hold your body in a neutral position with minimal effort. Certain physical structures in your body line up correctly with your center of gravity. Ask your chiropractor to assess your posture to see if these anatomical areas are correctly aligned.



Exercise of the Week

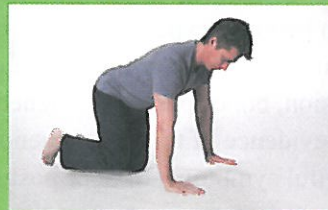
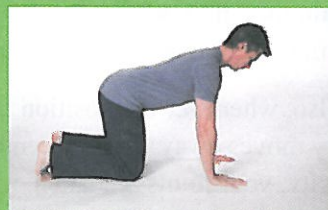
Lumbar stabilization (stage 1)

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise.)

Start: On hands and knees. Be aware of position of spine – start with a neutral spine or a flat back. Engage inner abdominal muscles by bringing belly button inward.

Exercise: Keeping spine steady, pull one shoulder back so hand comes an inch or two off floor (arm stays straight). Then, lift opposite hip slightly so knee comes an inch or two off floor. Balance and hold for 10-15 seconds. Switch arm/leg, balance and hold for 10-15 seconds. Perform 3-5 sets of this exercise per side.



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Test Your Self

There are three quick self-tests you can perform to see if you have proper posture:

1. Look in a mirror. Ears, shoulders and hips should each line up horizontally from left to right.
2. Stand with your back and buttocks against a wall. Place your feet approximately six inches from the wall. Does your head easily rest against the wall too? If it doesn't, you have forward head posture.
3. Lie down on your back on a hard surface. With your head on the floor, you should be looking straight up to the ceiling. If you feel your head tilt backward, or aren't looking straight above you, chances are that your upper back curve is the cause of your faulty posture.

Typical Symptoms of Bad Posture

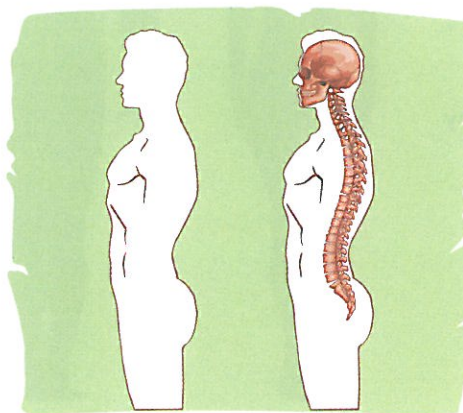
For every inch that your head is held forward, an additional 10 pounds of pressure is placed on the supporting tissues of your neck and shoulders.⁶ Muscles along the rear of your neck and the upper back are required to accommodate for this extra load. As a result, they'll experience stress and strain that is greater than normal.

Also, whenever the position of your body moves away from its center of gravity, your joints are taken out of their normal, stress-free positions. You then begin to experience abnormal wear and tear. Over time, joint cartilage erosion, bone spurs and pinched nerves are evidence of this phenomenon. Painful symptoms of poor posture may include:

- Muscle pain (aching or burning) and tightness
- Nerve pain (shooting, sharp or aching) traveling down the arm or leg
- Joint pain (aching, sharp or stabbing) and restriction
- Ligament or tendon pain (aching, sharp or diffuse)

How to Improve Posture?^{7,8}

1. Be aware. Practicing awareness of your posture is the first step to correcting it.
2. Take regular breaks from sitting at a computer. Research shows a strong correlation between neck pain and lengthy computer usage.⁹
3. Check the ergonomics of your workstation or desk.
4. Use a proper pillow for sleep. Avoid sleeping on your stomach.
5. Stretch the muscles that are too tight, and strengthen the postural muscles that are weak. Your chiropractor can show the correct techniques to use.
6. Get adjusted. When your spine moves properly, it has the best chance to position itself properly.



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Quote of the Week

"Take care of your body with steadfast fidelity. The soul must see through these eyes alone, and if they are dim, the whole world is clouded."
- Goethe

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