

Dr. Colin Gage * Dr. Duane Drobot

Nicola Valley Chiropractic
1949 Quilchena Ave.
P.O. Box 909
Merritt, BC
V1K 1B8

Ph: (250) 378-5456
Fax:(250) 378-8259
Email: info@merrittchiro.com
Website: www.merrittchiro.com

"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

How Is Your Posture?

With all the special requests, it seems that there are a lot of people who would like a little advice on "posture". This is something that chiropractors have to discuss with their patients every day. Sitting or standing with good posture is not difficult to physically do. It is the act of maintaining it that is the hard part. There are some exercises that can help, but you still have to break that old habit of slouching.

Slouching while sitting will automatically create an excess forward curvature of the spine. The shoulders will roll forwards and the head will droop in a forward and downward position. Sitting in this position for prolonged periods of time will inevitably cause problems. In an adult, the head weighs approximately 12 to 14 pounds. If you are sitting straight up, this weight is resting directly on the joints and ligaments of shoulder and neck. The weight is dispersed properly and the muscles are not being overworked. When a person slouches, the head leans forward. To prevent the head from falling forwards completely, the muscles at the back of the neck and shoulders must pull. This will counterbalance the force of gravity pulling downwards on the head. The longer a person sits in this position, the longer the muscles must remain contracted. These muscles are not designed to contract that hard for that long. They become fatigued, tight, and painful to the touch. You may even feel a burning sensation between the shoulder blades. Eventually, small knots in the muscles will form. They are usually about the size of a quarter and are called "trigger points". Once the muscles are in this state, they remain shortened and their flexibility is decreased. The prolonged stress on the neck will also cause stiffness and inflammation in the joints. The range of potential movement in the individual joints is then reduced which further limits the mobility of the neck. If the inflammation becomes bad enough, the neighboring nerves will become irritated. These nerves are responsible for controlling all the neck and shoulder muscles. The more the nerves become irritated, the more they will make the already tight muscles go into more severe spasm. When a person gets to this stage, dull aches headaches are also a common occurrence.

Chiropractors see this scenario daily in their office. There is no single simple treatment for it. To really fix the problem, you need to address the cause and not just the symptoms. The first and most obvious is to work hard on correcting your posture. When sitting, keep your shoulders back and chest forwards. If you are sitting at a desk, move your chair closer to the desk edge so you don't have to reach as far. Roll up a small towel and keep it behind your lower back so you maintain the arch in the lower back. This will help keep your shoulders back. If the muscles and joints of the neck and back are sore and tight, treatment by a Chiropractor can restore the proper movement to the joints. The Chiropractor can also teach the person appropriate stretches for the tight muscles and what exactly good posture looks like.

Next week, I will discuss what exercises you can do to strengthen the muscles involved in maintaining good posture. The better physical condition the neck and shoulder muscles are in, the better they will be able to play their role in helping you maintain that good posture.