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

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## Better Posture Equals Better Results in School

As a child, you may recall how your parents always nagged you to sit up straight. Not that I am purposely trying to give them the pleasure of being able to say "I told you so", but they had the right idea.

As a Chiropractor, I see firsthand how poor posture in students and adults can effect the neck and back. When you sit with your shoulders rolled forward, upper back leaning forwards, and neck bent down, the stress on the joints and muscles leads to problems.



On average, the adult head weighs ten to twelve pounds. When you sit up straight, this weight is distributed evenly to your shoulders and the muscles are not being used or worked significantly. When your head is leaning forwards, the muscles at the back of the neck and shoulders must work hard to hold up the head. These muscles are not designed to remain contracted for long periods of time and they will inevitably become stiff and sore. The soreness will be located primarily above and/or between the shoulder blades at the back of the neck. Classically, you may also experience dull achey headaches at the back, front, top, or sides of the head. To make matters worse, any muscle that is overworked and not stretched regularly will become shortened. This will limit the ability of the neck to do even routine movements.

When the shoulders roll forward, there are nerves and blood vessels that become compressed. These nerves and blood vessels pass under the chest muscles, through the armpit, and down the arm. When they are compressed, you will experience numbness or tingling in your arms and/or hands. As an example, I had a teenage boy in my office today that has terrible posture and his arms always go to sleep when he sits and plays Nintendo. As soon as he sits up straight, the symptoms disappear.

Imagine your son or daughter sitting in school (or even yourself at work) experiencing symptoms like I have described. Their ability to concentrate is lessened and they will not be able to sit still without becoming stiff. Remember also that one of the most common reasons for students being absent from school or making visits to a health care practitioner is because of headaches. The less a student is able to concentrate and the more school days they miss, the less likely they will be able to excel in their classes.

Good posture is something that has to be learned over time. If it is not encouraged at an early age by parents and teachers, students can form this bad habit rapidly. Once the bad habit is instilled in them, it is very hard to break. As for any physical problem, preventing it from happening in the first place is much easier than trying to correct it later.

Next week I will describe what good posture is and some simple exercises that will help promote it.