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

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## **Your Posture Is Important!**

Over the past six years as chiropractor in Merritt, it has been easy to see firsthand how poor posture can negatively affect one's back and neck. A few common examples I see in my practice are people who do quilting, sewing, knitting, scrapbooking, and even fly tying. These dedicated people spend hours sitting and/or standing bent over their almost never ending projects. Just when they finish one item, they are already thinking about the next.

These people come into my office complaining of neck and upper back pain. The muscles of the neck and shoulders are very tight and tender to touch. This will usually cause constant dull achy headaches that may be worse in the morning or during periods of stress. The ache would be felt at the back and side of the head, as well as around the eyes and forehead. People often mistake these headaches for sinus problems. The joints in their spine are stiff and are also tender when a chiropractor "palpates" them. They cannot turn their head side to side like they should be able to. The muscles between their shoulder blades start to burn or tingle after working on their project for a while. They may notice an inability to get a good night's sleep because they cannot get their neck comfortable. At times, they may wake up in the middle of the night with their "hands and arms asleep".

If this sounds like you, you may need to have some work done by a chiropractor to correct the problems that already exist. You will need to have the movement or mobility in the joints of your spine restored. The muscles may require some manual treatment to release the spasm or tension. You will need to be shown some simple muscle stretching exercises to help prevent the problems from returning. Once this is all done and your headaches, burning muscles, neck and back stiffness, and numbness in the hands are gone, then it is time to return to your hobby.

Once the chiropractor has done his or her part, it is time for you to make a few changes in how you do things. When it comes to posture, sit up straight with your shoulders rolled slightly backward. A concave curve in your low back should always be present. A good quality chair with a lumbar support will help you maintain this posture. Do not lean or bend your head forward. Leaning your head forward by only 2 cm increases the workload on the muscles of the neck and shoulders by 10x. If you need

glasses or a good source of light to see what you are doing, get them. The surface you are working on should be high enough that you do not have to bend over to reach it. It should also not be too high so that you must elevate your shoulders and elbows in order to reach whatever it is you are working on. If your feet do not comfortably reach the floor when sitting, use a small footstool or platform to rest your feet on. Do not continue to work for hours on end. Take a short break every half hour and a major break every couple hours. This may include doing some form of physical activity as a short walk. Log onto our website ([www.merrittchiro.com](http://www.merrittchiro.com)) and print off a few neck stretches from the “free stretches and exercises” section to do during your short breaks. Most importantly, remember that moderation is the key to staying healthy. Too much of anything is not good for you.

