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

Good Posture Equals Good Health

In our office, posture ranks up at the top of the list when you are talking about good overall health. To a chiropractor, it is just as important as eating right, exercising, getting a good night's sleep, and avoiding potentially harmful substances such as alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. With good posture, you will be able to accomplish physical tasks easier. This is because your bones are properly aligned and your muscles, joints, and ligaments can work as nature intended them to.



Poor posture can decrease your overall physical efficiency by compromising or limiting your range of motion. Your muscles could become permanently shortened or stretched when you are in a slumped over position, preventing them from functioning as they should.

Poor posture can create pain and numbness in your arms and hands. Rounded shoulders can make the muscles of your neck, chest, and shoulders very tight. When this happens, nerves and blood vessels that pass through your shoulder and chest area can become compressed (thoracic outlet syndrome). This will result in pain and numbness in your arms and hands. A chiropractor can prescribe stretching exercises to stretch out the tight and shortened muscles, relieving the numbness and/or pain.

Poor posture can cause a decrease in lung capacity. Because you cannot take in a full breath while slouched over, your lungs cannot take in as much oxygen as they normally should. This is why asthmatics seem to respond well to chiropractic treatment and improving their posture.

Episodes of back and neck pain are almost always partially linked to a history of poor posture. In fact, probably 80% of the problems people see a chiropractor for are really just the end result of stiff joints and tight muscles caused by prolonged poor posture. Of utmost importance are the nerves that exit the spine between each of the vertebrae. As poor posture puts stress on the joints of the spine, the nerves exiting between each of the bones (vertebrae) can become irritated and hyperactive. Then, everything that the nerves control (muscles, pain sensation, touch sensation, some internal organs) may not function properly. Also, because poor posture will cause increased stress on the joints and disks of your spine, over the long term this can lead to an increased risk of osteoarthritis and degenerative disk disease.

Poor posture will make you look older than you really are. When you are slumped over and not standing straight, you add years to your appearance.

I am not sure how one would go about measuring this, but some sources say that the more rounded a women's shoulders are, the more her breasts will sag. These same sources say that any women, no matter what her age, can reduce the sag in her breasts by 50% by simply standing tall. Just don't quote me on that one.

Poor posture can even have a negative effect on your bowels. If your spine arches or sways forward, your intestines may sag and cause constipation.

So what are some of the common causes poor posture? In most cases, it is due to a combination of several factors, some of which may include:

- car accidents, injuries, or falls
- poor sleep support (that old tattered mattress)
- excessive body weight
- poor vision (continually bending forward to see something)
- foot problems or improper shoes (you may need orthotics)
- weak or imbalanced muscles
- careless sitting, sleeping, or standing habits
- negative self image or self esteem
- occupational stress
- poor work space ergonomics

Although some of the above mentioned health risks are more serious than others, take your posture seriously. If you feel that your posture is poor and it has been like that for some time, you will likely require chiropractic treatment to restore the normal alignment and mobility of the bones (vertebrae) in your spine. Next week, I will discuss some ways to check your own posture and describe ways you can improve it.