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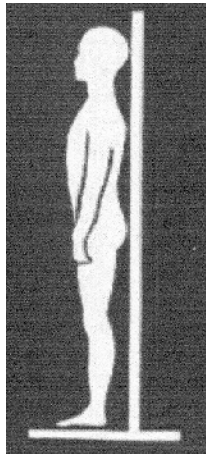
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"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"

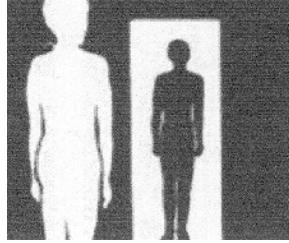
How is Your Posture?

As I mentioned last week, poor posture not only causes stress on your spine and its nerves, but it can also have a negative effect on your overall health. If your posture is not good, you may experience headaches, neck pain, back pain, shortness of breath, constipation, nerve irritation, and you will appear older than you should.

To determine if you have poor posture, there are a couple tests you can do at home:



-The first is the “wall test” (see diagram 1). Stand with the back of your head touching the wall and your heels six inches from the baseboard. With your buttocks touching the wall, estimate the distance with your hand between your lower back and the wall, and the back of your neck and the wall. If your low back and back of your neck are within two inches from the wall, you have excellent posture. The more you are over two inches, the worse your posture. To truly test the quality of your own posture, stand the way you normally would when doing this test.



-The second is the “mirror test” (see diagram 2). Stand facing a full length mirror and check to see if 1) the tops of your shoulders are level, 2) your head is straight, 3) the spaces between your arms and sides of your body are equal, 4) your hips are level, 5) your knee caps face forward, and 6) your ankles are straight. Now, stand sideways in the same full-length mirror, preferably while someone else to makes the observations for you. In this position, 1) your head should be erect, 2) your chin should be parallel with the floor and not tipped upward or downward, 3) your shoulders should be in the same plumb line as your ears, 4) your stomach should be flat, 5) your knees should be straight, 6) and your lower back should be slightly concave shaped.

Now that you can see for yourself how good, or bad, your posture is, here are a few tips on how to improve it.

-when standing, hold your head high, chin firmly forward, shoulders back, chest out, and stomach tucked in. If you stand all day at your job, rest one foot on a stool and take breaks to give your postural muscles a rest.

-when sitting, use a chair with firm low back support. Be sure your desk or tabletop height is level with your elbows. Adjust your chair height so that your feet are resting comfortably on the floor. If your chair is set at the appropriate height for your elbows but your feet don't reach the floor, use a footrest. If your chair is set up properly, your knees should be slightly higher than your hips. Get up and stretch every hour and so not sit on your wallet.

-when working on a computer, take one or two minute break every 20minutes. Keep the monitor 15 degrees below eye level.

-when sitting in your vehicle for long periods of time, adjust the seat so your knees are slightly higher than your hips and put a rolled up towel or small pillow behind the small of your low back.

-When sleeping, do so on your side with your knees bent and head supported by a pillow. When sleeping on your side, you want your spine to remain straight. This means that your pillow should not allow your neck to be bent down toward the mattress or elevated above neutral.

-when lifting, stand close to the object and squat down to reach it. The concave curve should remain in your low back. To actually lift it, use your legs and not your back.

If you have any of the symptoms I mentioned earlier or if you think you may have poor posture, make an appointment to see a chiropractor to have your spine and posture practices checked. If you ignore the problem, the areas of your spine that are being exposed to the constant postural stresses are prone to injury and even arthritic changes.