

# Dr. Colin Gage

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

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## Forward Head Posture

The next time you go for a walk in a mall, try to take note how other people's heads are positioned. Sound weird? Perhaps. But if you know what to look for, you can see which people likely have neck problems. When someone is standing with their arms at their sides, look at them from the side. Their ear, shoulder, hip, knee, and ankle should be in vertical alignment. In other words if you drop a plumb line from their ear it should pass through all those points.

Did you know that for every inch a person's head is positioned "forward", the gravity pulling the head in an even further forward direction is equal to a pull of 10 pounds? Its true! As far as the muscles in your upper back and neck are concerned, they have to work harder than normal in order to keep the head (chin) from dropping forwards onto your chest. This forces the muscles that raise the chin or pull the head back to remain in constant contraction, putting pressure and tension on the joints, muscles, and eventually the nerves of the neck and upper back. As an example, if a person's head is tipped forward two inches, it would be similar to hanging a 20-pound watermelon from the front of his or her head? It is no wonder that people who do this consistently end up with tension headaches, upper back pain, and neck pain.

When you hold your head in a forward position, the mobility of the joints in the upper four vertebrae of the neck will be significantly restricted. All of our joints need to move and be positioned properly to remain healthy. If these joints have abnormal pressure on them due to improper positioning and are not allowed to glide freely, degeneration of the joints and discs in that area will eventually occur.

To prevent forward head posture from happening in the first place, practice good posture and keep the muscles of your neck strong and flexible. If you have had forward head posture for some time, see your chiropractor so that the mobility in the joints and flexibility of the muscles within and around the neck can be restored. He or she can also show you some simple exercises to help strengthen and release the chronic spasm of the muscles involved. In my office, we now have a "spinal decompression" or traction table to further assist in restoring the proper mobility of the joints in the neck and back, as well as assisting in the healing of damaged and/or herniated disks. Once your treatment protocol is complete, your postural habits are improved, and you

either commence or continue to exercise regularly, your persistent neck pain and headaches will be a thing of the past.