

# The benefits of good posture



Posture refers to the way you hold your body when sitting, standing, laying, and walking. Good posture helps prevent excessive strain on the joints and muscles of your body, which helps to reduce pain and minimize your risk of injury. Good posture can even boost your self-esteem and mood. While it takes time and effort to train your body to maintain good posture, the health benefits are definitely worth it!

## What Does Good Posture Look Like?

Let's first discuss the anatomy of your spine. Your spine is comprised of three natural curves that need to be aligned correctly so that the weight of your body is evenly distributed over both of your feet.

The three curves of your spine are:

- Cervical curve – a slightly forward curve of your neck.
- Thoracic curve – a slightly backward curve of your upper and mid back.
- Lumbar curve – a slightly forward curve of your lower back.

Good posture means that your ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle are in alignment from the side. In a standing position, good posture involves:

- Your chin parallel to the floor.
- Your shoulders back and even.
- Your spine in a neutral position, with no excessive arching of your back.
- Your arms hanging loosely at your sides.
- Your core muscles gently engaged.
- Your knees even and pointing forward.
- Your body weight evenly distributed over both of your feet.

In a seated position, your chin should be parallel to the floor, with your shoulders, hips and knees even, and your knees and feet pointing forward.

## **Benefits of Good Posture**

Having good posture not only contributes to a good appearance, but it has many health benefits, including:

- Encourages proper alignment of joints and bones.
- Promotes effective and efficient use of the muscles of your body.
- Reduces abnormal wear and tear on joint surfaces.
- Decreases stress on the ligaments of your spine.
- Prevents abnormal positioning of your spine.
- Prevents muscle fatigue.
- Decreases the risk of strain and sprain injuries.
- Decreases the risk of back pain.

## **Causes and Effects of Poor Posture**

Unfortunately, good posture can be a challenge to maintain. Humans weren't designed to sit in chairs or hold prolonged postures. We are designed to move! There are a number of factors responsible for poor posture; the most common factors that lead to poor posture include a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, stress, weak or tightened muscles, and pregnancy.

Poor posture can affect your body from head to toe; common conditions that can arise due to poor posture include:

### Headache

- Jaw pain
- Neck and back pain
- Hip, knee and foot pain
- Shoulder pain
- Fatigue and breathing issues

## **Exercising to Improve Posture**

You can improve your posture by performing certain core strength and flexibility exercises, particularly for your chest and hip muscles. It's important to be conscious of your posture while you exercise, which may mean checking your position in the mirror or having a qualified physiotherapist monitor your exercise program. The good news is that once you start increasing your core strength and overall flexibility, you'll start to notice improvements in your posture in a short weeks.

## **Everyday Tips to Improve Posture**

In addition to increasing your core strength and flexibility, there are numerous things you can do every day to improve your posture, including:

- Being mindful of your posture during the day, especially when sitting at your desk. Try things like using external reminders to check your posture such as whenever a phone rings, or an email notification comes up.
- Having an ergonomically friendly workstation. A sit to stand desk can make posture changes easier and change the prolonged loads your body experiences when you have only one predominant position like sitting.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Get regular cardiovascular and resistance exercise to keep your muscles supple, your joints supported and your bones strong.

- Get some help from the professionals when you can: Physiotherapy and Massage Therapy make a great combination approach to strengthening weak muscles and lengthening short muscles.

Remember, gravity is always working against you so frequently changing postures is key to prevent muscle fatigue or even more permanent changes to your spine. The BEST posture is often the NEXT posture! Your goal is to spend most time in an optimal position that a dysfunctional one, but even the perfect posture will be tiring over time so wriggle, sit, get up and walk around, stretch, and move every 30 minutes if you can.

If you're looking to improve your posture, you may benefit from physiotherapy, which will involve an individualized treatment plan that is tailored specifically to your postural issues. You will work with your physiotherapist to set goals and track your progress as you work through your treatment plan.

Undergoing a physiotherapy assessment is one of the best ways to ensure you have good posture. After the assessment our physiotherapists will create a program that is specific to your needs, and set you on the right path toward optimal posture. Massage Therapy is also a key team member in maintaining good posture and healthy tissues. They are experts in finding those shortened or tight bands of muscle that aren't letting you move well. A proper course of treatment can really make your muscles more limber and ready for strength training, and keep a lot of muscle pain to at bay!

#### References

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