

Article 026

Improve your posture

It is amazing how few people realize how much a good posture can improve their quality of life.

If your goal is to maintain a healthy weight and avoid experiencing pain in your later years, monitoring and working on improving your posture earlier on is a must.

The benefits of a good Posture.

Among other things, an improved posture can:

- help you get more out of your chosen sport or exercises
- make you look and feel healthier and younger
- help improve your breathing
- help you become stronger and more confident
- decrease the risk of injury
- prevent strain on your muscles, nerves and joints

Signs of poor Posture.

Bad posture usually results from poor habits repeated over a lifetime. Unfortunately, many of us don't even consider, let alone analyze our posture until we experience restricted movement or pain caused by poor posture.

If you want to do a basic self-assessment of your posture, look for one or more of these typical signs of poor posture:

- rounded back
- drooping chest and shoulders
- head protruding forward
- tilted pelvis and hips
- collapsed arches in your feet
- an elevated hip or shoulder
- body rotation

For a more accurate and professional assessment you should visit one of the many specialists who deal with diagnosing and rehabilitating posture related problems such as your chiropractor, physiotherapist, remedial masseur, osteopath or personal trainer.

Causes of poor Posture.

All of the problems listed above are potential indicators that your body has habitual irregular movement patterns.

The reasons for these irregular movement patterns can be wide and varied but typically include things like:

- poor ergonomics, particularly relating to sleeping, sitting or standing habits
- muscle and/or skeletal imbalance
- untreated/undiagnosed injury compensation
- poor or inappropriate techniques used during exercise and sport

Improving your Posture.

Improving your posture is possible once the causes of your "symptoms" have been identified.

Typically, improving your posture means improving or changing your habits, some of which you can do all by yourself, others you should consider getting help for.

If you want to feel and look better, become fitter and stronger, lose weight or become and stay pain free into your later years try some or all of the following tips to improving or maintaining your posture.

1. Find your neutral Alignment.

Article 026

Improve your posture

Your personal trainer or any of the other practitioners detailed above should be able to help you understand and recognize what a neutral alignment looks and feels like. Generally speaking, neutral alignment is where your spine is in its strongest position and is able to deal with external stresses and strains.

Understanding what your neutral alignment is and how to move into it while sitting, standing and moving will greatly improve your posture.

2. Check your posture Constantly.

Try to get into the habit of checking your posture throughout the day. Using reminders like setting the alarm on your phone or watch to alert you every hour to check your posture will help you to form this habit. Another way to remind yourself is to use post-it note on your computer screen or in your car.

3. Vary your position Often.

If you sit down a lot during the day, look for excuses to stand and walk around. For example, if most of your work is done sitting behind a desk, try standing up when you talk on the phone (standing while on the phone actually improves the sound of your voice by ensuring the airways from your diaphragm are clear).

Other excuses to vary your position include getting up and walking to the kitchen or water cooler for a glass of water every half an hour or so and standing up to stretch every 45 minutes while you're watching TV. Whenever possible, go for

a short stroll around the block or around your neighbourhood during morning tea, afternoon tea or your lunch break.

4. Strengthen your Hips.

Misalignment in our pelvis and lower back can often be caused by weak or inflexible hip muscles. Include exercises in your workouts that stretch and strengthen you hip flexor, extensors, abductors, adductors and rotators muscles.

Any good **gym** instructor or **personal trainer** will be able to tell you which exercises and stretches to include in your workout and show you how to do them correctly.

5. Strengthen your Abdominals.

Learn the appropriate abdominal strengthening exercises to train your abdominals to hold your pelvis in neutral alignment. Try doing some stabilization work using a Swiss Ball in addition to more traditional abdominal exercises like crunches and knee raises.

Again, if you are new to exercise or have never been taught how to use a Swiss Ball before, seek the expertise of a gym instructor or good personal trainer.

6. Stretch and strengthen your Back.

Learn how to correctly perform lower back stretches and strengthening exercises. You can perform most stretches anywhere at any time. Lower back stretches are often great at helping to minimize or eliminate debilitating back pain.

Lower back strengthening exercises will ensure that your

Article 026

Improve your posture

lower back muscles are strong and balanced with your abdominal muscles.

7. Strengthen your upper Body.

Incorporate exercises into your workouts that help strengthen your shoulders, upper back, chest and arm muscles.

Remember one of your goals should be muscle balance so don't focus too heavily on one particular muscle group and vary your exercises regularly to achieve balance and continually challenge your muscles.

Remember, the sooner you get help and start to address the underlying causes of poor posture the more easily it will be for you to change your daily habits and the better your chance of improving your posture so you can avoid other problems and pain later on.

Source: www.weightloss.com.au

8. Vary your exercise program.

Try Yoga, Tai Chi or Pilates and consider including at least one of these in your regular exercise program. These styles of exercise emphasize alignment and controlled movement of the spine, which can greatly improve your posture.

9. Use Imagery.

Visualize yourself as a giant gum tree reaching towards the sky; or imagine yourself growing taller as you stretch your arms above your head. Walk tall; concentrating on your posture and imagining yourself moving in perfect alignment.

10. Seek advice from Specialists.

Postural problems left untreated can have a negative impact on your health and reduce your quality of life. In addition to your personal trainer, you may want to consult with a podiatrist, an orthopedic specialist, a physiotherapist, chiropractor, massage therapist or an osteopath.