

The Wellness Express™



Jump on the train to good health

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Why Is Posture So Important?

Presented by: Total Health Systems

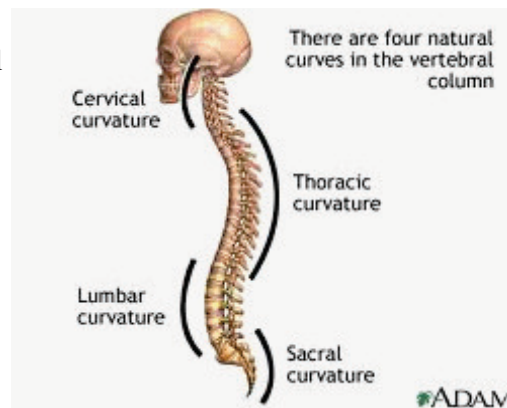
People have been making a big deal about “posture” for centuries. Remember those old television ads that show ladies walking around with text-books on their heads, mumbling “the rain in Spain...falls mainly...in the plain?” Why were they - and why are we still - making posture such a big deal? Because...

Excellent posture is not only beautiful to look at, but it also reflects self-confidence. This can be beneficial in any environment where you want to be more impressive, like at a job interview or on a first date! Improper posture causes misalignment in your spine, and this can put excessive stress and strain on muscles, joints and the supporting connective tissues.

Your chiropractor defines posture as: “The position of the human body relative to gravity.” *Relative to gravity* is important here, because this is the force that can cause the pain and damage related to improper postural positions.

Posture can be either *dynamic* or *static*, but both are important when it comes to your functional strength and stability. Dynamic posture is related to your body position while performing different activities like running or climbing, whereas static posture is more related to positions like sitting or standing.

Regardless of which type of posture you are talking about, one of the most important factors in good posture is the proper curvature of your spine. The spinal column is made up of 26 bones stacked one on top of another, combined to form 4 different postural curves from top to bottom: cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral as shown in the diagram below.



One of the main functions of these curves is to allow for an adequate amount of shock absorption from above (gravity) and below (impact from feet striking the ground). If the curves are positioned properly, fewer injuries are likely to happen due to these forces. If the curves are too much or not enough, this can cause excessive compressive loads on the discs, joints, muscles and connective tissues of the spine.

Exercise of the Week

Seated Twist

Difficulty: Easy

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Seated on a chair.

Exercise: Keeping knees pointing straight ahead, reach around behind you, holding onto armrest or backrest of chair to maintain this twisted position. Relax lower back, breathing slowly and deeply. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



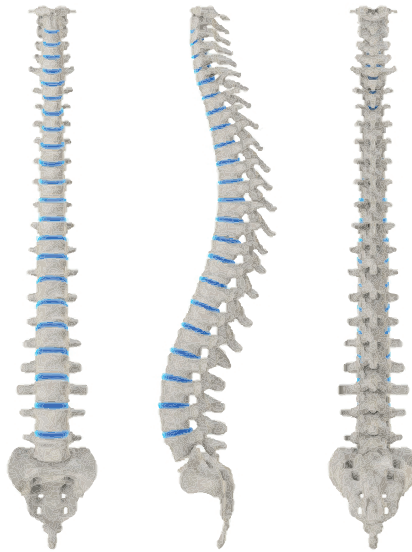
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The most common postural deviations are:

FORWARD HEAD POSITION

- occurs when the ear is not centered over the middle of the shoulder (from a side-view). Because the weight of the average head is approximately that of a large bowling ball, for every inch it drifts forward relative to your shoulder, 10X more weight is exerted upon the muscles, joints and ligaments of the neck and upper back, causing strain in these tissues. This occurs most commonly when sitting in front of a computer screen or television. To avoid it, first position the screen at the level of your eyes, preferably directly in front of you. Second, be sure your eyesight is good. If it is poor, you will have a tendency to lean forward to get closer to the screen.



SLOUCHING

- occurs when the upper back is over-curved and the shoulders round forward. This makes a person look tired or dejected, and is one of the most unattractive postures. It also alters the curvatures of the entire spine, so it is the least desirable in that respect too. Postural muscles of the lower back are placed under a tremendous load, and their over-activation adds to the compressive forces felt by the discs and joints of the lumbar spine, increasing the likelihood that these tissues will become irritated and/or inflamed.

Any alteration in the natural curves of the spine will also lead to **vertebral subluxations**. These are specific areas of the spine where one vertebra does not move properly relative to another. When this happens, nerves that exit the spine at the level of the subluxation can become irritated, as well as the muscles attached to these vertebrae. If these areas are not adjusted by your chiropractor, then function will not be restored, leading to chronically tight and restricted segments. Long-term, this makes it near impossible to maintain proper posture.

How do I correct my posture?

AWARENESS

- pay attention to your posture when sitting or standing. If you know you are out of position, correct it. Instead of “pulling your shoulders back”, imagine standing as if you are a quarter-inch taller. The thoracic curve will balance out, and your chest should naturally rise, thereby allowing the shoulders to gently fall back into position. Head position will be more centered, taking stress and strain off the area where the head meets the shoulders.

GET ADJUSTED

- when vertebral subluxations are present in your spine, it is almost impossible to maintain a proper pattern of spinal curves.

Quote to Inspire

“Even if you’re on the right track, you’ll get run over if you just sit there.”

Will Rogers

1. Spinal Chart from

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/imagepages/19463.htm>



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