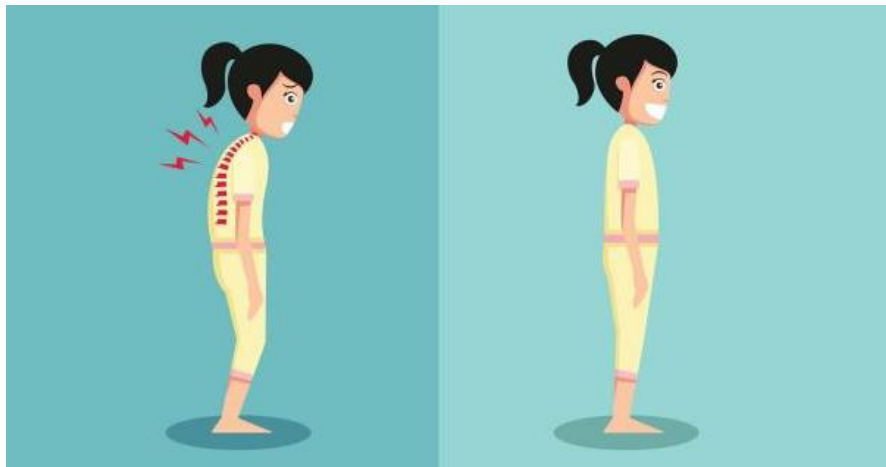


Tips and Tricks to Improve Your Posture

No matter what injury I am treating, every single patient I see always asks me how to improve their posture. Whether it is while they are driving, cooking, or at their computer working, posture seems to be on everyone’s mind. But what is posture? And why is it important?



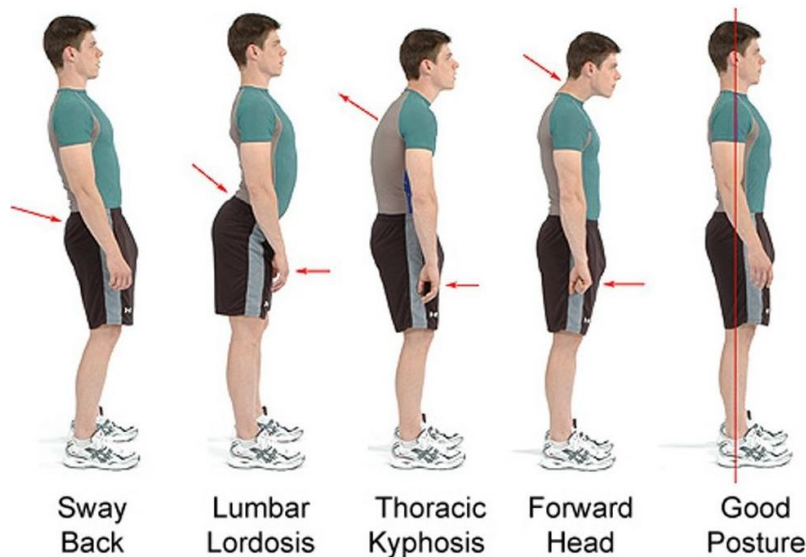
What is Posture?

Posture is the position you place your body in while sitting, standing, sleeping, and various other activities. It is the position our bodies assume when we do not think about it. Oftentimes, because of gravity, a lot of people develop a “slouched” posture. This is because gravity is pushing down on our joints, and the path of least resistant is to give in to the push and slouch. Although there are some people who have good posture, most people have adopted postures that are poor, which can negatively affect their quality of life. I often see people who complain of aches and pains that can easily be resolved with a little bit of posture training.



Why is Posture so Important?

There is a natural curvature to the human spine. This curvature allows for the structures in your body to be properly supported throughout the day. Any deviation from this ideal positioning for a prolonged period of time can alter the support of your joints and muscles, leading to injury in the future. Poor posture can lead to poor sleep, troubled digestion, altered circulation, and irregular breathing patterns.



Common Complaints I see Related to Poor Posture

- Headaches
- Jaw pain
- Neck and low back pain, including radiculopathy (e.g. sciatica)
- Shoulder pain, including rotator cuff injuries
- Hip, knee, and foot pain

Poor posture over several years can make people more susceptible to osteoarthritis, muscle tears, and joint dysfunction. These can cause inflammation, causing a pain response that becomes chronic if the faulty posture is not fixed.



Easy Tricks to Improve Poor Posture

1) Fix your workstation

Many people work desk jobs and find they are super stiff at the end of their shift. Some people develop headaches, while others develop neck or low back pain. An easy way to prevent this from occurring is making sure your workspace is ergonomically set up. Since most people work 8-9 hour days, this might be the easiest way to help prevent pain related to poor posture. Some tips related to having an appropriate workstation include:

- Adjusting the height of the seat so your feet are supported by the floor and your knees and hips are bent to a 90 degree angle. If this is not possible, placing a step stool under your feet to adopt this posture is an option as well.
- Positioning the monitor at eye level to prevent straining your neck.
- Positioning the keyboard and mouse close to your body at a level allowing for your wrists and forearms to be parallel with the ground.
- Scooting back into the chair completely to ensure your back is in full contact with the chair, which will promote an upright posture.



2) Scheduling regular breaks throughout the day

My favourite tip to give to patients is to utilize the “reminder” feature on their phones. At the start of every hour, set a reminder to stretch and reset your posture for just a few minutes. This will help prevent prolonged periods of slouching, which can help with pain and discomfort.

3) Using a posture brace

Although I do not recommend this option often, sometimes patients need an external force pushing them into an upright posture. Posture braces can be found at any health and medical store, are relatively cheap, and easy to use. I tell my patients to try using the brace for half an hour to an hour the first time they try it on. If they like it and find it helps keep them upright, they can gradually increase the amount of time they keep it on. Make sure not to pull the straps too tight the first few times of wearing as it can get uncomfortable.



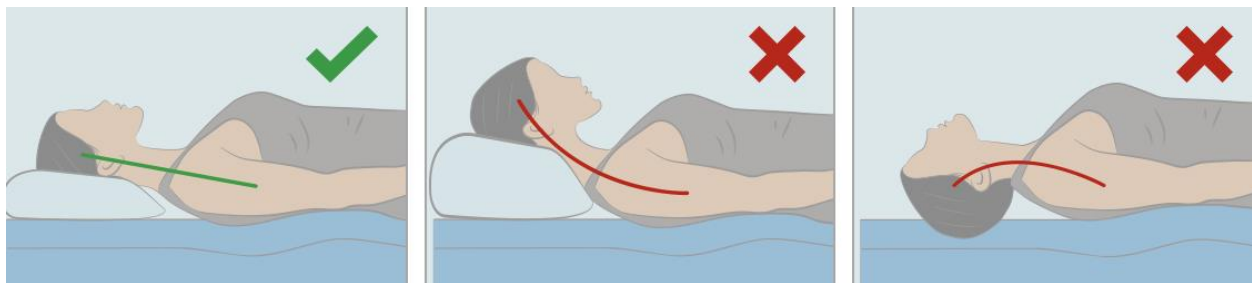
4) Placing support behind your low back and between your shoulder blades

Taking a rolled up towel and placing it behind your low back while sitting and driving often gives people the cue to sit up taller and not slouch. To make it even more effective, rolling a smaller towel and placing it between the shoulder blades will force you to keep your shoulders back to prevent the towel from falling!



5) Pick a good pillow to sleep on at night

Although it seems like an easy fix, many of my patients use improper pillows when they sleep at night. Given that we spend 7-8 hours a night sleeping, having a good supportive pillow is very important! Using a pillow that is too thin will cause the head and neck to sink into the pillow, causing a bend towards the pillow. Using a pillow that is too thick will cause the head and neck to bend away from the pillow. That is why picking a pillow that is the appropriate height is so important!





What Next?!

If you've been experiencing general aches and pains throughout your body, and you think your posture may be the culprit, you might be in need of a physiotherapist! With more specific stretching and strengthening exercises we will work on improving your posture with your daily activities. Email us at informphysio12@gmail.com for more information!