

Tips to improve your health through better posture

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Improved health through correct posture? Really?

Really.

The science is limited, but so far it indicates that maintaining correct posture increases your lung capacity , improves breathing , and reduces the likelihood of falls . Behavioral studies also show that posture can have a positive impact on mood and confidence levels , and can even impact hormone levels in a way that increases feelings of power and ability to tolerate risk.

While the evidence is not conclusive, it is compelling. Improving your posture may improve your health. So here are some simple guidelines to help you achieve and maintain correct posture.

Correct seated posture:

- Place your feet flat on the ground, about shoulder-width apart. Don't cross your legs or sit on one of your legs, because it can reduce circulation to the feet and also create an unnatural curve in your spine.
- Hold your shoulders back and down, arms at your side with your forearms parallel to the floor, and avoid leaning or reaching forward for long periods of time.
- Don't hunch. Keep your head positioned directly above your shoulders and your chin down and back. Imagine there is a string attached to the back of your head, gently pulling you upward.
- Sit with your bum back in the seat and maintain the natural curve of your spine when leaning back against your chair. Use a small pillow to support your lumbar area (low back) if needed. The best seated position for your back is somewhat reclined, sitting at a 135-degree angle rather than a 90-degree angle . You should feel your "sit bones" directly on the chair.

Correct standing posture:

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and parallel to each other. Don't stand with your toes pointing outward or inward, but straight ahead.

- Keep your knees just slightly bent, with your weight evenly distributed on both feet.
- Hold your back in a neutral position, with a slight curve in your lower back. Many people have a tendency to tilt their pelvis forward, which exaggerates the curve of the lower back. Also avoid tipping your pelvis too far back, resulting in a flattened curve in your low back. Both positions cause unnecessary stress on muscle and spinal tissue and can lead to low back pain.
- Avoid hunching your head and shoulders forward. Hold your head back and up, so that it is positioned above your shoulders. Your chin should also be tucked slightly, so that your eyes naturally look straight ahead to the horizon, not upward or downward.
- Push your belly out slightly to engage the muscles in your back and sides. These muscles support your spine **and** help you preserve the healthy, natural curve of your spine.

These tips may seem obvious, but most of people do not follow them with consistency. Some say it feels uncomfortable at first, because they are used to slouching or hunching. This is because the muscles that support the spine have grown weak. But if you remember and practice these guidelines for good posture, you will begin to feel more energized and focused, and will quickly develop a stronger, healthier back.

Want to see what we're talking about? Check out this short video on posture. (link to posture video on YouTube.)

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