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Strengthen the Neck & Back Muscle and Reduce Muscle Tension

Look around you, we are becoming a society of hunched-over people, especially among our teenagers. With the constant usage of handheld electronic devices (mobile phone, ipad, video game unit, computer, mp3 player, e-reader), our head is in a forward and downward position, as a result will put excessive strain on the spine (neck, shoulder and back).

Technology users too easily slide into poor posture involving the head, neck and shoulders. This can result in headaches, neck pain, shoulder and arm pain, even compromised breathing. The usual symptoms include neck ache, shoulder ache, numbness and tingling that extends down the arms, even as far as the fingers.

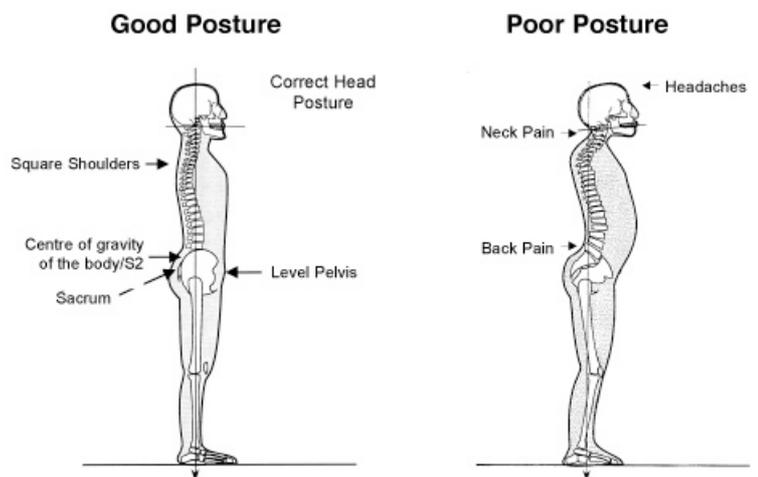
Consider that the average human head weighs 10lbs in a neutral position (when your ears are over your shoulders). For every inch you tilt your head forward, the pressure on your spine doubles. So if you're looking at your hand held device, your neck could be holding up 20 or 30lbs! This puts tremendous strain on your spine and can cause misalignment of the cervical vertebrae and spinal discs.

LOW BACK AND NECK PAIN



Consequences of a Poor Posture:

- soft tissue of the cervical spine gets sore and inflamed
- muscle strain
- disc herniations
- pinched nerves
- over time, there is a possible change in the natural curve of the neck



What to do to strengthen our back muscles

Weight-bearing exercises	30 minutes on most days of the week. Do a 30-minute session or multiple sessions spread out throughout the day. The benefits to your bones are the same.
Muscle-strengthening exercises	2 to 3 days per week. If you don't have much time for strengthening/resistance training, do small amounts at a time. You can do just one body part each day. For example do arms one day, legs the next and trunk the next. You can also spread these exercises out during your normal day.
Balance, posture and functional exercises	Every day or as often as needed. You may want to focus on one area more than the others. If you have fallen or lose your balance, spend time doing balance exercises. If you are getting rounded shoulders, work more on posture exercises. If you have trouble climbing stairs or getting up from the couch, do more functional exercises. You can also perform these exercises at one time or spread them during your day.

These exercises are designed to be done along with a weight-bearing exercise program. They do not replace the need for walking or doing other weight-bearing activities. It is also normal to experience muscle soreness which will last for a day or two, but should not be causing prolonged pain.

If you have pain with any of these exercises or are not sure if a certain exercise is right for you, it is recommended to discuss your concerns with a physical therapist first.

Sports Massage Therapy to reduce muscle tension

Most episodes of acute lower back pain are caused by muscle strain, such as from lifting a heavy object, a sudden movement or a fall. The low back pain can be very severe and last for several hours, several days or even a few weeks. When back muscles are strained or torn, the area around the muscles can become inflamed. With inflammation, the muscles in the back can spasm and cause both severe lower back pain and difficulty moving. The large upper back muscles are also prone to irritation, either due to de-conditioning (lack of strength) or overuse injuries (such as repetitive motions). Upper back pain may also be due to a specific event, such as a muscle strain or sports injury. Massage can help work out the spasm/irritation and improve range of motion.

Sports massage therapy is characterized by long gliding strokes and kneading motions and different levels of concentrated pressure on the areas of muscle spasm. The patient will feel some pain or discomfort from the pressure, but the muscle spasm should be lessened after the massage. Any soreness from the pressure should fade in 1 to 2 days, and the muscles that were worked should be less tight for a week or more. A typical Sports massage therapy program for muscle spasms consists of four sessions over 6 weeks.



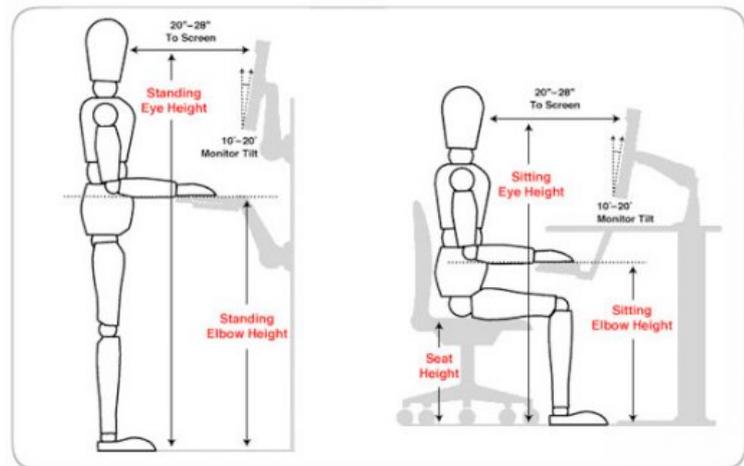
Always keep a Good Posture

Sitting Posture for Office Chairs

- Be sure the back is aligned against the back of the office chair. Avoid slouching or leaning forward, especially when tired from sitting in the office chair for long periods
- For long term sitting, such as in an office chair, be sure the chair is ergonomically designed to properly support the back and that it is a custom fit
- When sitting on an office chair at a desk, arms should be flexed at a 75 to 90 degree angle at the elbows. If this is not the case, the office chair should be adjusted accordingly
- Knees should be even with the hips, or slightly higher when sitting in the office chair
- Keep both feet flat on the floor. If there's a problem with feet reaching the floor comfortably, a footrest can be used along with the office chair
- Sit in the office chair with shoulders straight
- Don't sit in one place for too long, get up and walk around and stretch as needed

Standing Posture

- Stand with weight mostly on the balls of the feet, not with weight on the heels
- Keep feet slightly apart, about shoulder-width
- Let arms hang naturally down the sides of the body
- Avoid locking the knees
- Tuck the chin in a little to keep the head level
- Be sure the head is square on top of the spine, not pushed out forward
- Stand straight and tall, with shoulders upright
- If standing for a long period of time, shift weight from one foot to the other, or rock from heels to toes.
- Stand against a wall with shoulders and bottom touching wall. In this position, the back of the head should also touch the wall - if it does not, the head is carried to far forward (anterior head carriage).



Walking Posture

- Keep the head up and eyes looking straight ahead
- Avoid pushing the head forward
- Keep shoulders properly aligned with the rest of the body

Regular Strength Training and Sports Massage Therapy
are the Best Prevention for neck & back injury

