

The Importance of Proper Posture

Correct Alignment Leads to Better Health

Hope Bentley

Talk of good posture often generates images of women walking in a circle with books balanced on their heads or soldiers standing at attention. But good posture does not have to be rigid or ridiculous. In fact, far from ridiculous, it may be the key to good health.

According to Patrick Wroblewski, a Boulder, Colorado-based structural integration practitioner, "Good posture is a dynamic, working awareness of how gravity is coming down through the body." In other words, just as the body moves and changes throughout the day, so should posture.

Wroblewski explains that many people come in to his practice with complaints

misalignment, like standing with a hip cocked to one side. These common forms of less-than-perfect posture mean less-than-healthy consequences for the body.

Does Posture Matter?

Ever feel low on energy? Get sick often? Experience headaches or digestive upset, like constipation or diarrhea? Feel less agile than you used to be? Your postural habits may be behind these symptoms.

Proper posture means the body is aligned so that all the muscles work as they were designed to. On the other hand, poor posture leads to inefficient



Working in front of a computer often leads to poor posture. Learn how to counteract the effects.

of lower back pain, and stiff necks and shoulders, most of which have a direct correlation to poor posture. If a person sits hunched in front of a computer screen all day, it's likely the head hovers towards the screen, the lower back has collapsed and the tail bone is supporting the weight, and legs are crossed or splayed. Bad standing posture includes the same hunching or lateral

movement, causing the muscles to have to do extra work. For instance, if the head isn't resting correctly on top of the neck and spine but hovers over the chest instead, the muscles at the back of the neck have to remain contracted to hold the head up. The results? Circulation becomes hindered, and oxygen and

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Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things.

-Robert Brault

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nutrients have a hard time flowing through the body. Contracted muscles are less able to receive hydration and energy, and the tissue eventually becomes hard and fibrous. Eventually, muscles can pull bones out of alignment and cause serious problems and discomfort.

The bottom line is, poor posture can lead to muscular stress and fatigue, which can in turn lead to deficient circulation, compromised immunity, and poor lymph flow--which brings us back to low energy, frequent illness, headaches, digestive issues, and waning agility. So to answer our earlier question, yes, posture matters.

Perfecting Posture

Correcting poor posture requires undoing the hardening, or fibrosis, of the muscles that have been habitually contracted, allowing them to relax and the bones to move back into place. Perhaps a simple concept, but not an easy task.

Wroblewski uses a combination of techniques to help correct posture: Swedish massage can help increase circulation and release chronically held areas. Deep tissue massage helps wake up the body and reverse some of the fibrosis in the tissue. And other bodywork techniques can further precipitate postural adjustments. He says, "Any kind of manipulation--craniosacral, acupressure--can cause an unwinding of tension and allow the body to release to the position in which it belongs."

Wroblewski also recommends movement education, an umbrella term that includes many types of bodywork, such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Hellerwork, and Trager Approach. Movement education advocates that one's body structure and movements can get stuck in habitual, unhealthy patterns. Movement education unwinds the patterns and teaches the body, as well as the mind, anew. This is done through a series of sessions where practitioners may use hands-on manipulation to teach the student different, more efficient ways to move, sit, stand, reach, bend, lift and walk. Ultimately, this balances the body and allows energy to move freely.

Movement education techniques may be

especially beneficial for people suffering from chronic difficulties, but also for anyone trying to achieve higher levels of physical and mental wellness.

According to Wroblewski, bodywork can induce a "neutral reprogramming," so that people can start from scratch and learn to recognize when good posture is breaking down. Then the necessary adjustments can be made.

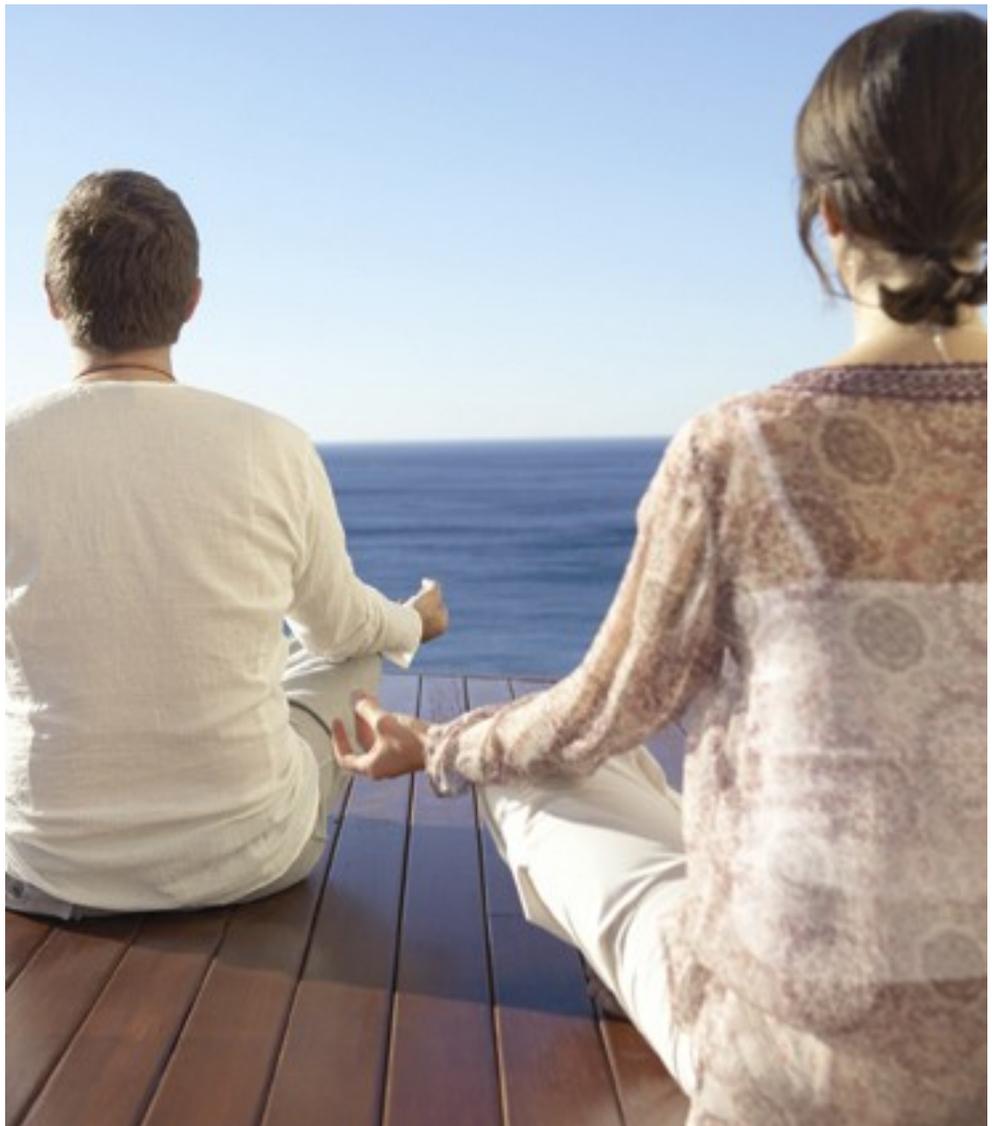
What's a Body To Do?

Desk jobs are notorious for wreaking havoc and causing postural impairments. Sitting for hours on end staring at a computer screen is likely one of the worst things you can do to your body. If you spend a lot of time sitting, make sure both feet are flat on the ground to give yourself a "tripod" of stability for the spine to rest on. Also, be sure to take frequent breaks, even if it just means walking to the window for a

moment, or getting a glass of water. And when standing, distribute weight evenly between both feet, and don't lock the knees or ankles.

Good posture takes practice, practice, practice and constant reminding. Wroblewski suggests leaving reminders in places where you will run into them throughout your day.

Old habits die hard, and this is true for muscular habits too. Be sure to schedule a series of massage treatments to help retrain the body. And talk to your practitioner about stretches and posture tips that can enhance your massage sessions. As you progress, you will notice less joint and muscle pain, fewer headaches, more energy, and possibly even stronger immunity and better digestion. Finally, you will develop a stronger awareness of your body and an increased sense of well being.



Practice makes perfect! Good postural habits require repetition and practice, practice, practice.

Nuking Food Safely

How To Microwave with Care

The microwave oven--that ubiquitous appliance now found in every American kitchen--is, for the most part, safe. However, microwaves can come with some specific health risks--including microwave exposure and chemical contamination--if they are old, not used properly, or used with non-microwavable dishes or coverings. Fortunately, following a few guidelines can help you effectively avoid microwave leakage and prevent chemical exposure, while using your microwave safely and soundly.

Avoid Leakage

- Ensure a tight seal by regularly cleaning the door seal with water and a mild detergent.
- Avoid microwaves that have loose doors. If the door doesn't close tightly, don't use it.
- Keep your distance, standing at least two feet away from, and to the side of, operating microwaves.

Prevent Exposure

- Avoid heating food in plastic or Styrofoam, which contain plasticizers. These leach into food during microwaving, creating xenoestrogens--substances that mimic hormones in the body and have been associated with birth defects, developmental delays, low sperm counts in men, early puberty in girls, and an increased risk of certain cancers.
- Steer clear of plastic wraps to cover your food during microwaving. Most of these also contain plasticizers that can leach into food, especially if they come in contact with hot, high-fat food.

- Use microwaveable glass cookware to ensure safe microwaving.

Microwave ovens are part of today's cook world and offer certain conveniences --there's little chance of escaping that fact. But by taking a few simple precautions, you can ensure microwave cooking adds to your life--not take away from it.



A few simple tips will ensure microwave safety.

Yogurt, the Super Food

Balance Digestion, Improve Immunity, and Prevent Disease

In some form, yogurt has existed since at least 2000 BCE, and many food historians believe it predates recorded history, possibly going back as far as 9000 BCE. Why such staying power? A bit of a wonder food, yogurt improves digestion, which can boost immunity and even help prevent colon cancer. One dairy product even most lactose intolerant people can eat, yogurt is loaded with active bacterial cultures, the key ingredients that make it so healthy.

While we typically think of bacteria as dangerous bugs that cause disease and infection, the body is host to billions of bacteria that live in the intestines and help digest the foods we eat. These good bacteria, or microflora, actually fight off the bad bacteria that cause illness.

Some of these same good bacterial species are used to ferment milk, and it's these cultures that give yogurt its texture and tart flavor. They also process much of the milk sugar, called lactose, during fermentation, which is why yogurt usually doesn't bother people with lactose intolerance.

Eating yogurt helps maintain the microflora in the gut, optimizing digestion and keeping harmful bacteria in check. Ever noticed how a course of antibiotics is often followed by a bout of diarrhea? This is because antibiotics kill off all the bacteria in the gut--the bad stuff and the good--leaving the gastrointestinal tract compromised. Fortunately, yogurt can help counteract this imbalance.

Furthermore, this food is a good source of nutrients, including B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus. Whole milk yogurt also contains conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), an essential fatty acid with cancer fighting properties, especially beneficial in preventing breast and colon cancers. And CLA has been shown to increase fat metabolism, helping the body convert fat to lean muscle.

Maintaining the good bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract is key to healthy digestion, and eating quality yogurt is a great way to do this. Be sure to read the labels and choose varieties that contain live active cultures to ensure you're getting the most from your yogurt.

*Kindness in
words creates
confidence.
Kindness in
thinking creates
profoundness.
Kindness in
giving creates
love.*

-Lao-Tzu

Welcome to my new office location off of Pierce & Coalmine at 6638 W Ottawa Ave in Littleton! It is within the friendly Executive Plaza One building. I hope you will enjoy the new, peaceful environment.

Coming Soon - Infant Massage instruction. I am currently working on my certification to teach parents/guardians how to massage their infants & children. My training is with the International Association of Infant Massage. I have been working with several families in order to receive my certification and the rewards have been priceless. To learn more about this association, please visit www.iaim.net

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