



Good Posture for Back Pain Relief *

by
Peter Field

Bad posture - there are times when we are all guilty of it.

Standing, walking or sitting, we can all find ourselves with poor posture from time to time.

When we do it only now and then, of course, little will come of it. But if we continue in bad postural habits then we are storing up some painful problems for the future.

In addition to chronic back pain, poor posture can also prevent correct functioning of the nervous system housed in the vertebral column, leading on to all manner of complaints from headaches to insomnia.

Perhaps the most common postural bad habit is rounded shoulders and upper back. When we adopt this position, usually the head leans forwards and downwards, throwing the entire spine out of alignment.

Often this poor posture is accompanied by an extended tummy, arched lower back and protruding derriere.

All of these bad postural habits can and will lead on to back pain and other problems if left uncorrected.

Those with good posture will have three natural curves in the back and the bony vertebrae - or little bumps - will form a more or less straight line down the entire back.

When the natural curvature of the back is excessive then postural deformity known either as hyperkyphosis or hyperlordosis is most often the cause. Hyperkyphosis is an exaggeration in the upper curvature of the back and is a condition common in the elderly, while hyperlordosis is a similar condition but in the lower back.

Often, though, these two conditions exist together. As our bodies mature and age, our muscles tend to weaken and our vertebrae or spinal discs tend to lose a degree of their suppleness. This increases the wear and tear on the spine, making it more difficult to maintain correct posture.

But these conditions are not unique to the elderly. Those of us who spend long hours in front of a computer monitor or bent over books without proper seating and posture - and without taking sufficient breaks - can also develop hyperkyphosis and subsequent back pain.

'Flat back' is yet another example of chronic ill posture which involves a near total loss of curvature in the back, usually other than in the neck area.

Simply put, the spine is at its most healthy alignment when it follows something similar to an 'S' formation.

To check for this, hold the head in a straight, neutral position, chin in. Make sure that your ears form a line with the middle of your shoulders, keeping your shoulder blades back and chest forward. Ensure that your tummy is tucked in and your knees straight yet relaxed.

This 'S' alignment makes sure that you are putting a minimum of stress and strain on the joints, ligaments and muscles responsible for good posture.

Posture can be adversely affected by a number of different things including being overweight, underdeveloped muscles and incorrect shoes.

The bed in which you sleep can also affect your posture. Choose a bed that is firm without being too hard and a pillow that is not too high but high enough to comfortably support your head and take the weight from your neck and shoulders as you sleep.

Together with the muscles which support the spine - the spinal erectors - the muscles of the stomach play an important role in good postural health and endurance. Be sure to exercise these muscles if you really want good back health.

Stretching exercises and weight bearing exercise are also great for postural health.

If you really do want to feel and look good, invest in good posture and you will find yourself skipping through life.

*** IMPORTANT: This Information is not a replacement for medical or nutritional advice. Be sure to contact your doctor if you're experiencing symptoms of back pain.**

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