

Posture: The neglected component of fitness

This week I would like to share with you an article written by Natural Healthcare Center's fitness specialist Steve Loder. Steve is someone I rely upon in building individual fitness programs designed for the many different needs of my patients. More information on Steve and his work can be found at www.NaturalHealthcareCenter.com.

Our posture conveys information not only about our physical fitness, but also about how we feel. The observation that good posture makes a statement about our character was one of the reasons that once upon a time, finishing schools for young ladies included posture classes in their curriculum. Proper carriage was

considered essential for making a positive impression. Perhaps this association, along with the memory of our Aunt Bertha poking us in the back as children and admonishing us to "sit up straight," is why many of us tend to avoid and neglect our posture these days.

Young children usually have naturally good posture. Many children begin to slouch as they get older, and a rounded shoulder syndrome often develops during adolescence. While some posture problems such as scoliosis require medical attention, slouching is often a natural consequence of physical inactivity and a lack of body awareness.

In adulthood, our daily lifestyle and poor posture habits have

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effects that accumulate over the years. Sedentary occupations, unusual work-related physical stress, being overweight (especially in the abdominal area), and the natural course of aging all take their toll on our posture.

However, poor posture need not be an inevitable outcome for most people. A decline in posture and its associated musculoskeletal problems can be prevented through maintaining an awareness of proper body mechanics

and participation in a well-balanced exercise program emphasizing strengthening and flexibility activities for the core muscle groups. This includes the abdominal, back, shoulder, gluteal, and hip flexor muscles.

A personal trainer always stresses correct body position while exercising, and can discuss with you how proper core exercise technique and body mechanics can enhance your posture as it applies to your daily activities. But while enhancing posture depends on adequate muscle strength and flexibility, good posture also requires a conscious development of proper body alignment when standing, walking or sitting. Together, exercise and improved body awareness

can help keep you standing tall.

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