



Sit Up Straight and Watch Those Heels

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The importance of good posture has been ingrained in our minds since we became old enough to stand upright. And for good reason.

According to the American Chiropractic Association, back pain is the second most common reason after colds for seeing a doctor: Simply maintaining good posture can help alleviate the problem.

So, what exactly is good posture and how can you tell if you've got it? Having good posture is when your body is aligned for maximal efficiency and function.

When your body is not in optimal alignment, your muscles and joints must work harder because they can't relate to each other as they were designed to.

This creates inefficient movement, causing you to waste energy during your daily activities and workout routines.

Our bodies were designed for movement, but the sedentary nature of most jobs today often forces us to remain in one position for long periods of time, usually sitting at a desk.

Unfortunately, this can wreak havoc on our muscles and joints, leading to stiffness and pain.

There are a number of ways that you can determine whether you have good posture. Here are three tests that you can use at home to test your posture:

- **The Wall Test:** You can check your alignment while standing with your back against a wall. Your head, shoulders, ribs, buttocks, calves, and heels should touch the wall. There should be a 1 to 2 inch gap between the back of your neck and low back and the wall.

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- The Mirror Test: You can also stand facing a mirror: look at your hands. A person with good posture will have their hands on the side of their legs and will see just the thumb and index finger. A person with poor posture will see her/his hands on the front of their legs and will be able to see more of their fingers. Check to see if your knee caps are symmetrical and pointing forward and that your feet both point in the same direction. Then move up and look for any asymmetries between your hips, belly button and shoulder levels. If there are asymmetries it is possible that certain muscle groups are being overworked and are therefore tight.
- The Head Shake Test: Stand facing a mirror. Close your eyes and shake your head around for about 10 seconds. Open your eyes and check to see if your head is tilted or rotated to a particular direction. It is quite possible that your workstation is not ergonomically designed and thus particular neck muscles are being overworked.

Here are a few tips to help improve your posture:

- Start your day by stretching. Stand up and stretch your arms above your head! Then “hug your best friend” by wrapping your arms around your body and turn as far as you can to the left, then to the right.
- Exercise regularly to keep the abdominal muscles strong to help support the spine.
- Avoid wearing high-heeled shoes. Choose shoes that offer good foot support and comfort. Some styles can affect the body’s centre of gravity. Flat shoes are better.
- Avoid purses or briefcases that are always carried on one side particularly if they are heavy. Instead invest in a backpack that has padded adjustable straps so that the load can be equally distributed.
- Avoid cradling the phone between your head and shoulder. It is much better to use the speakerphone or hold the phone in your hand.
- Sleep on a firm mattress and avoid sleeping on your stomach. Instead sleep on your back side and avoid oversized cushy pillows under your neck.