

## No More Hunching! 5 Tips To Better Posture

### **1. Take a picture**

Seeing what the world sees is a mighty strong argument if you think you suffer from poor posture. Have a friend (or professional) take a few photos of you sitting and standing. Make sure they are from several angles. Then study them. What do you see? Is your chin three inches in front of the rest of your head? Are your shoulders almost touching in front of you? Is your lower back looking like an old mule's back? Understanding where exactly your poor posture is may be the first step towards correction.

### **2. Choose the right exercises**

Not all exercises are created equal. Choose the ones that pertain to your specific issue. Tight shoulders need stretching while the upper backs need strengthening. If that's not your issue, you can choose to skip it. Core and stability training is best for people with weak lower backs. Should you do them? Of course you should, but if you have limited time, stick with the ones that are appropriate for your issues. Though there are exercises that everyone can benefit from, most people don't have to do all proscribed exercises all the time. Keep your routine simple and specific.

### **3. Alter one thing about your lifestyle**

Ok, admittedly this may be a tough one to accomplish! But it is common sense. Generally speaking, can you think of one lifestyle habit that may be worsening your posture? Common ones are too much time hunched in front of a computer or seated behind a desk. Observe one thing about your daily postures that can be altered in some beneficial way. Simply adding in more breaks from the offending habit, like getting up and stretching several times a day, are all you need to fend off any more bodily destruction. Carry a lighter bag and switch shoulders when carrying it. Again, this is a tricky one to accomplish, but keeping your lifestyle free from tension-building postures will only benefit you in the long run.

### **4. Stretch**

As important as strengthening exercises are, stretching is equal to or in some cases more important. Tight, shortened muscles contribute to poor posture not to mention muscle aches and soreness. Common areas of tightness are the chest, upper traps, neck, low back and hip flexors. Mostly caused by modern living (driving, television watching, computer games) muscle tension can be relieved by daily stretching. Stretching can lengthen shortened muscles, help to bring blood and nutrients to the tired muscle, and help to restore function. So do your exercises, but remember to do your stretches too.

### **5. Build body awareness**

Building body awareness is simply acknowledging the times when you are slouching, stooping or hunching and then changing the outcome. Feeling where your body is in

space, like knowing what you look like in your posture pictures, is the first step towards building body awareness. Ask yourself, “Am I standing tall? Are my shoulders back? Does my lower back ache?” Finding answers to these questions may help you to build awareness of what is going on in your body. Take a look in the mirror. Are you happy with your stance? Now shut your eyes. Does your body feel good? Notice the tight spots by doing a mental body scan from the top of your head to your toes. This practice takes time and focus and it certainly won't change things overnight. But trying to feel where you're at is what building body awareness is all about.

Correcting poor posture takes time and practice. Utilizing the 5 tips listed above is only a portion of what goes into correcting poor posture. Finding support either from a personal trainer, Pilates instructor, Yoga teacher or physical therapist will up your chances of success. Improved posture makes you feel better, look younger and stand taller. A good thing for everyone.

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