



Practicing The Correct Posture Can Help Lead To Wellness

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By Dr. Edward M. Burstein

As health care reform continues to evolve, we will be hearing a lot more about prevention and wellness. The idea of wellness is not just the absence of disease. It's a lifestyle, a state of being, a process. In wellness, nutrition, mental health, and physical well-being are integrated for optimal health. Unlike traditional medicine, which focuses on the doctor as the agent of change, wellness emphasizes self-responsibility.

Practicing correct posture is one easy way in which we can accept this responsibility. Physical well-being focuses on maintaining good body balance -- proper alignment of the spine -- in order to prevent ill effects of low back pain and neck strain.

Check your posture by studying yourself in the mirror as you stand normally. Look for signs of a protruding abdomen, slumped shoulders or swayback (excessive forward curvature of the lower spine), and uneven hips or shoulders. One, or a combination, of these characteristics puts added stress on the muscles and ligaments of the lower back. The consequences are most often painful and can lead to more serious health conditions.

Good standing posture allows for a slight hollow in the small of the back. While standing against a wall in a normal, relaxed position with your upper back and buttocks touching the wall, check your posture by slipping your hand between the wall and your back near your waist. Your hand should slip in and out easily, slightly touching both the wall and your back.

To improve posture, imagine a string running vertically down the center of your spine, like the string of a puppet. Straighten your spine by tightening the buttocks and tucking them forward while flattening your stomach. If this results in pain or discomfort, or your shoulders and hips remain uneven, some of the vertebrae in your spine may be slightly misaligned. The doctor of chiropractic is uniquely trained to correct these misalignments and restore correct posture.

Practicing good posture takes on a health maintenance role beyond that of protecting the spine. Slumped shoulders and protruding stomach may be indicators of a person who is depressed or has low self-esteem. Literally, these people carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. But a person who stands up straight and faces the world square is usually one who has confidence, has learned to manage the cumulative effects of stress, eats well, and is proud of a healthy body.

Editor's note: Dr. Burstein is founder and Clinical Director of the Berkeley Heights Chiropractic Center, a multi-doctor holistic health care center dedicated to natural healing and optimum health. He has been awarded the status of Teaching Diplomat by the International College of Applied Kinesiology, and shares this distinction with only four other chiropractors in the state and 117 worldwide. Dr. Burstein has lectured at Overlook Hospital and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital on immune, autoimmune and chronic degenerative diseases. For information, call (908) 665-0770.