

Marolyn's Massage Update

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The Importance of Proper Posture

Correct Alignment Leads to Better Health

Hope Bentley

Talk of good posture often generates images of women walking in a circle with books balanced on their heads or soldiers standing at attention. But good posture does not have to be rigid or ridiculous. In fact, far from ridiculous, it may be the key to good health.

According to Patrick Wroblewski, a Boulder, Colorado-based structural integration practitioner, "Good posture is a dynamic, working awareness of how gravity is coming down through the body." In other words, just as the body moves and changes throughout the day, so should posture.

Wroblewski explains that many people come in to his practice with complaints

misalignment, like standing with a hip cocked to one side. These common forms of less-than-perfect posture mean less-than-healthy consequences for the body.

Does Posture Matter?

Ever feel low on energy? Get sick often? Experience headaches or digestive upset, like constipation or diarrhea? Feel less agile than you used to be? Your postural habits may be behind these symptoms.

Proper posture means the body is aligned so that all the muscles work as they were designed to. On the other hand, poor posture leads to inefficient

"If 'thank you' is the only prayer you say, that will be enough."

- Meister Eckhart



Working in front of a computer often leads to poor posture. Learn how to counteract the effects.

of lower back pain, and stiff necks and shoulders, most of which have a direct correlation to poor posture. If a person sits hunched in front of a computer screen all day, it's likely the head hovers towards the screen, the lower back has collapsed and the tail bone is supporting the weight, and legs are crossed or splayed. Bad standing posture includes the same hunching or lateral

movement, causing the muscles to have to do extra work. For instance, if the head isn't resting correctly on top of the neck and spine but hovers over the chest instead, the muscles at the back of the neck have to remain contracted to hold the head up. The results? Circulation becomes hindered, and oxygen and

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nutrients have a hard time flowing through the body. Contracted muscles are less able to receive hydration and energy, and the tissue eventually becomes hard and fibrous. Eventually, muscles can pull bones out of alignment and cause serious problems and discomfort.

The bottom line is, poor posture can lead to muscular stress and fatigue, which can in turn lead to deficient circulation, compromised immunity, and poor lymph flow--which brings us back to low energy, frequent illness, headaches, digestive issues, and waning agility. So to answer our earlier question, yes, posture matters.

Perfecting Posture

Correcting poor posture requires undoing the hardening, or fibrosis, of the muscles that have been habitually contracted, allowing them to relax and the bones to move back into place. Perhaps a simple concept, but not an easy task.

Wroblewski uses a combination of techniques to help correct posture: Swedish massage can help increase circulation and release chronically held areas. Deep tissue massage helps wake up the body and reverse some of the fibrosis in the tissue. And other bodywork techniques can further precipitate postural adjustments. He says, "Any kind of manipulation--craniosacral, acupressure--can cause an unwinding of tension and allow the body to release to the position in which it belongs."

Wroblewski also recommends movement education, an umbrella term that includes many types of bodywork, such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Hellerwork, and Trager Approach. Movement education advocates that one's body structure and movements can get stuck in habitual, unhealthy patterns. Movement education unwinds the patterns and teaches the body, as well as the mind, anew. This is done through a series of sessions where practitioners may use hands-on manipulation to teach the student different, more efficient ways to move, sit, stand, reach, bend, lift and walk. Ultimately, this balances the body and allows energy to move freely.

Movement education techniques may be

especially beneficial for people suffering from chronic difficulties, but also for anyone trying to achieve higher levels of physical and mental wellness.

According to Wroblewski, bodywork can induce a "neutral reprogramming," so that people can start from scratch and learn to recognize when good posture is breaking down. Then the necessary adjustments can be made.

What's a Body To Do?

Desk jobs are notorious for wreaking havoc and causing postural impairments. Sitting for hours on end staring at a computer screen is likely one of the worst things you can do to your body. If you spend a lot of time sitting, make sure both feet are flat on the ground to give yourself a "tripod" of stability for the spine to rest on. Also, be sure to take frequent breaks, even if it just means walking to the window for a

moment, or getting a glass of water. And when standing, distribute weight evenly between both feet, and don't lock the knees or ankles.

Good posture takes practice, practice, practice and constant reminding. Wroblewski suggests leaving reminders in places where you will run into them throughout your day.

Old habits die hard, and this is true for muscular habits too. Be sure to schedule a series of massage treatments to help retrain the body. And talk to your practitioner about stretches and posture tips that can enhance your massage sessions. As you progress, you will notice less joint and muscle pain, fewer headaches, more energy, and possibly even stronger immunity and better digestion. Finally, you will develop a stronger awareness of your body and an increased sense of well being.



Practice makes perfect! Good postural habits require repetition and practice, practice, practice.

Soothe Your Skin's Winter Ailments

Kayla Fioravanti

The drying effects of winter are upon us. Here are some at-home ideas to help soothe your skin through this challenging season.

Cleanse

Put away your foaming gels and soaps and stock up on creamy products. Cleansing creams, lotions, and milks are great winter choices, because they don't contain the harsh, oil-stripping detergents found in most cleansing gels.

Tone

Shelve your astringents and switch to a toner. In the cold months, your skin needs to be soothed and balanced, not dried out further.

Moisturize

Choose heavier creams than you would in summer months. You can even use your heavy eye cream on your lips and face. If your skin itches, the dry air is causing the moisture in the top layer of your skin to evaporate quickly. Slather those areas with extra moisture until you

feel relief, and never be afraid of using pure oils on your skin--a bottle of jojoba or olive oil is great to have on hand.

Exfoliate

Exfoliate twice a week to remove dead skin cells and help your skin absorb the extra moisture you are using. Because central heating systems reduce the amount of sebum our skin secretes, contributing to dryness, exfoliation will free this natural regulating agent. Use a cream-based exfoliant with jojoba beads, so your body can soak up the rich oils.

Hydrate

For a simple in-home hydrotherapy treatment, start your day with a steamy shower. Just as you are finishing, switch the water to cold for about 15 seconds and then back to warm for 15 seconds. Repeat the process for two minutes.

Shower and Bathe with Oils

Did you know you can apply body oil, lotion, or cream during your shower or

bath? The heat and steam help your skin to thoroughly absorb the moisture.

Exercise Myths

Fiction Vs. Fact

Although old fitness fictions like "no pain, no gain" are fading fast, plenty of misconceptions still exist. Following are some of the most common myths, counteracted by the latest research.

FICTION: YOU WILL BURN MORE FAT IF YOU EXERCISE LONGER AT A LOWER INTENSITY.

FACT: The most important focus in exercise and weight control is how many calories are burned during the activity. The faster you walk, step or run, the more calories you use per minute. However, high-intensity exercise may be more difficult to sustain.

FICTION: IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WORK OUT HARD AND OFTEN, EXERCISE IS A WASTE OF TIME.

FACT: Any exercise is better than none. For example, regular walking or

gardening for as little as an hour a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease.

FICTION: IF YOU EXERCISE LONG AND HARD ENOUGH, YOU WILL ALWAYS GET THE RESULTS YOU WANT.

FACT: In reality, genetics plays an important role in how people respond to exercise. Your development of strength, speed, and endurance may be very different from that of other people you know.

FICTION: THE HEALTH AND FITNESS BENEFITS OF MIND-BODY EXERCISE LIKE T'AI CHI AND YOGA ARE QUESTIONABLE.

FACT: The benefits abound! T'ai Chi, for example, has been shown to help treat low-back pain and fibromyalgia. Improved flexibility, strength, and stress management are just some of the

benefits.

FICTION: HOME WORKOUTS ARE FINE, BUT GOING TO A GYM IS THE BEST WAY TO GET FIT.

FACT: Some people find it easier to stick to a home-based fitness program. In spite of all the hype on trendy exercise programs and facilities, the best program for you is the one you will participate in consistently.

This information was provided by IDEA, www.ideafit.com.

*Let yourself be
silently drawn by
the strange pull
of what you
really love. It
will not lead you
astray.*

-Rumi

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Ready or not, the winter holiday season is upon us. Yes, it's all here: the lights, the giggling children, the holiday dinners, the decorating and the gatherings. Fun times and stressful times. Take good care of yourselves this season. Rest up. My motto has become, "Do less and enjoy more".

Remember to give the gift of massage. It's easy. Simply go to the web site and click. And of course treat yourself to some bodywork this year. You deserve it!!

A heartfelt "Thank You" to all of you for your many years of support and may you all thoroughly enjoy this season.

Enjoy and many thanks,

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