

The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Throughout my day, there are certain things I do my best to focus on for the sake of my health: Drink water, exercise, eat a well-balanced diet, have good posture, and take work breaks to look at pictures of my loving children. (that was before they were teenagers.... Lol). All equally important parts of my day. However, the one I continually struggle with is... not sitting or walking around like I am Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh. (He's a habitual SLOUCHER, in case you've forgotten). Picture meeting a stranger for the first time and the first thing that catches your eye might be their charming smile, or their chiseled jaw line. But I've long thought one of my most prominent characteristics, besides of course my sparkling eyes 😊 is, yes, my poor posture. Slouching is unfortunately a bad habit I've dealt with for many years. My mother would constantly be reminding me of my slouching shoulders and lagging chin. Even now as an adult I am constantly catching myself sinking further and further down into my desk chair. Until my chin is nearly resting on the keyboard. Thanks to gravity, our feet are well grounded. But the efforts of not completely falling on our face we owe to our postural muscles. But between working from home, crossing our legs, extended screen time and Netflix marathons, the relationship we have with our postural muscles may have faded away over time. While a hunched stance may seem like it's set in stone by the time, we reach a certain age, and you may feel you've missed the boat for better posture. Believe it or not, with a little effort there's a good chance you can still stand up a little taller.

Posture is the position in which we hold our bodies while standing, sitting, or lying down. Healthy posture is the correct alignment of body parts supported by the right amount of muscle tension against gravity. Our everyday movements and activities can affect this alignment and put stress on joints and muscles, sometimes resulting in pain and potentially permanent damage if bad posture becomes habitual overtime. To clarify, posture is basically how you hold your body. There are two types of posture. Dynamic posture is how you hold yourself when you are moving, like when you are walking, running, bending over etc. Static posture is how you hold yourself when you are not moving, like when you are sitting, standing still or sleeping. Both are equally as important. Improving your posture is a product of an overhaul of your postural habits. You have to realize that much like anything worth doing, improving your posture practice will take some time. It may take some effort, but it is very possible.

Don't be a slouch! When standing. Stand up tall. You'll feel better and look better -- slimmer, even. Pretend you're standing against a wall to measure your height. Hold your head straight and tuck in your chin. Your ears should be over the middle of your shoulders. Stand with your shoulders back,

knees straight, and belly tucked in. Don't let your booty or hips stick out. Straighten up so you feel like there's a string tied to the top of your head pulling you towards the sky. Standing with the good posture looks and feels fantastic, plus it's very healthy for your joints, muscles, bones, blood circulation and most importantly, your self-esteem. Your posture can reflect your level of confidence to the people around you. Good posture demonstrates confidence, vitality, and overall well-being. That's why proud and confident people stand tall with excellent posture. Or at least they do their best too!



Sitting posture is extremely important for everybody whether you're at school, playing video games, studying online, working an office job, or coming home from a day on the tools to sit in front of a screen. Think of it this way: If you went to the gym and did strenuous leg exercises five days a week, your legs would feel overworked and sore. Sitting at a desk every day can bring similar results. It is increasingly important with the current COVID-19 pandemic that is forcing people to work and study from home. A lot of workplaces are now providing a more ergonomic working environment and assessments of your home workspace. However, when it comes to working at home, a lot of us either don't understand how to set up the most posture friendly working environment or get lazy and fall into bad postural habits. With more people now doing a full working week from home, performing the below checklist will reduce your chances of postural overload injuries.

- Take brief walks around the house.
- Gently stretch out your neck muscles to relieve tension (let your chin fall right, center, then left, hold and breath)
- Make sure your feet are firmly planted on the floor.

- Relax your shoulders. Let them fall naturally, they should not be rounded, pulled toward your ears, or forced backwards.
- Keep your elbows in close to your body. Bent between 90 and 120%.
- Be sure your back is fully supported. Use a back pillow if necessary.
- Make sure your thighs and hips are supported. YOU should have a well-padded seat, allowing you thighs and hips to be parallel to the floor.

What are the chances you're reading this from your handheld device, engaging in the serious but harmful position called tech neck? (Definition: head forward, shoulders rounded, and back slumped.) Possibly you've heard of "tech neck" because it's essentially an epidemic on its own these days. Most people spend 8-10 hours a day on their computer working and do it again as soon as they log off. The result? Headaches, neck spasms, and creaky shoulder joints, caused by holding one's neck still for long periods. But we all know that ditching our devices entirely isn't really an option. Instead, what we can do is make sure we exercise right and practice good habits to prevent the aches and pains associated with tech neck. Hold your phone or tablet up close to eye level to avoid sloping your head forward or bending your neck down. If your arms get tired from holding the screen higher, buy a holder to elevate your device, or rest your elbows on a tabletop to prop your arms up comfortably. If you work on a laptop, if possible, get a second monitor, and adjust the height. Whenever you find yourself sitting or staring at a screen for an hour or so, it's time to take a break. Stand up. Stretch your arms, hands, and neck. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, roll your shoulders back, and shrug with one shoulder at a time, 10 times for each exercise.



Sorry, Stiletto enthusiasts, high heels are NOT good for posture. Boo! 😞 The perfect, pointy pair of 4-inch heels can make any outfit, but with this style comes a price, and not only in the form of dollar bills. Studies have shown that these towering shoes can be costly in more ways than one, taking their toll on your spine, hips, knees, ankles, and feet, while altering your posture and gait. High heels change your center of gravity and put extra pressure on the lower back. The curve of the foot supports the curve of the spine, therefore as well as protecting our feet, our shoes should provide support so that we can stand and walk in alignment.

It's important to find shoes that offer structural support that align your feet appropriately, support the natural curve of your spine, and don't cause foot pain. Foot pain can affect the way you walk, which will impact your balance and posture as well. Wear a comfortable, supportive pair of shoes to your daily activities. At home, wear something that your feet feel comfortable and can breathe in. Remember that any pair of shoes you wear has an impact on the alignment of your entire body.

If you're curious about your posture or you are unsure if you practice good posture, take the Posture Test. You can take this test at home without any equipment. You will need someone's assistance to take a measurement with a ruler or tape measure. First, stand against the wall, with the back of your head touching the wall. Place heels 6 inches out from the wall. Your buttocks and both shoulder blades should be touching the wall. Have someone measure the space between your neck and the wall. Also, measure the distance between the wall and the small of your back. Both these measurements should be less than 2 inches. If the measurements are greater than 2 inches, you likely have poor posture. You can take the posture test repeatedly to track your progress. With a little effort, you might be surprised how quickly you can correct bad posture.

The bottom line, good posture can make you look taller, broader, and stronger, and it can make you feel more confident and capable. Good posture can even improve your mood, reduce back pain, and decrease stress. Listen to your body! You may have been dismissing the discomfort you are feeling due to bad posture for a while. But, trust me, it's your body's way of getting your attention. Take steps to improve your posture now – you'll be glad you did later on. And most importantly, your mom will be extremely proud of you.

See your physician, physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor for further information and advice.

Poor Posture Hurts Your Health More Than You Realize.

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/poor-posture-hurts-your-health-more-than-you-realize-3-tips-for-fixing-it/>

Take Your Posture Test: How to Tell if You Have Bad Posture.

<https://www.csiortho.com/blog/2018/november/take-your-posture-test-how-to-tell-if-you-have-ba/>

9 Tips for Better Posture.

<https://www.webmd.com/osteoporosis/ss/slideshow-posture-tips>