

Correcting faulty posture

Posture is essentially the position of the body in space, the relationship of the body parts—head, trunk, and limbs—to each other. Changes in posture occur when any part of the body is moved. Posture also communicates nonverbal body language, reflecting self-esteem and mental attitude. *Optimal* or *ideal* posture is the state of muscular and skeletal balance that protects the supporting structures of the body against injury or progressive deformity, whether at work or rest. It involves the positioning of the joints to provide minimum stress on the body.

Conversely, *faulty posture* increases stress on the joints. Increased stress can be compensated for by strong muscles, but if they are weak or the joints lack mobility or are too mobile, joint wear and modification can occur. Damage and changes to the surrounding tissues can also occur.

Posture involves the chain-link concept of body mechanics in which problems anywhere along the body chain can lead to problems above or below that point. Examples:

- Low back or knee pain can arise from pelvic joint disorders.
- Headaches, eyestrain, and neck and upper back pain can be caused by the head being too far forward or rearward.

The effects of posture can be far reaching, involving respiratory, digestive, and circulatory systems as well as the musculoskeletal system. But how is poor or faulty posture developed?

Causes of poor posture

The causes of faulty posture can be divided into two categories: positional and structural.

Structural causes are basically permanent anatomical deformities that may not be amenable to correction by conservative treatments. However, some leg length inequalities and some ankle and foot issues can be corrected conservatively.

Positional causes of poor posture include

- poor postural habit—for whatever reason, the individual does not maintain a correct posture
- psychological factors, especially self-esteem
- normal developmental and degenerative processes
- pain leading to muscle guarding and avoidance postures
- muscle imbalance, spasm, or contracture
- joint hypermobility or hypomobility
- respiratory conditions
- general weakness
- excess weight
- loss of proprioception—the ability to perceive the position of your body
- over reliance on passive support from a non-ergonomic chair

Correcting postural faults

Postural faults must be accurately analyzed before they can be effectively corrected.

Examination should include the following:

- observation of the patient as they sit and move about
- spinal alignment-
- if appropriate: measurement or estimation of the deviation from ideally erect postures using 4 views of X-ray, inclinometry, and posture guides —done in three or all four views
- leg length measurements
- flexibility tests and joint mobility tests
- muscle length and strength tests
- “Mirror-image” Adjustments, Specific traction to remold the spinal alignment and exercises to strengthen the spine are key elements in overall correction.
- *** WHO DO YOU KNOW THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM CORRECTIVE CHIROPRACTIC CARE??