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MAGAZINE

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# Posture



BY MEHERNAAZ DUGAST ROUILLE

Do you or your children tend to sit with a rounded back?

Do you or your children sit for many hours a day?

Lower back or neck tension? Or other muscular aches?

Do you have difficulties in sitting and/or standing upright?

Do you go to the gym or play sports and still find it difficult to have a good posture?

If your answer to any of the above questions is a YES it's time to find a solution.

However, you might ask, why do I need a solution?

## IMPORTANCE OF AN UPRIGHT GOOD POSTURE:

1. Good posture results in good and complete respiration
2. Improves blood circulation
3. Internal organs work more efficiently with a good upright posture
4. All the muscles and joints of the body are in balance when one has a good posture
5. One can avoid musculoskeletal aches and pains, like back and neck pain, disc herniation's, etc... with a good upright posture

Most of us know about the above advantages of a good posture but we still ignore our postures, due to fatigue or not having sufficient knowledge on how to do so!

Most people avoid their posture and do excessive sports or some sport, and only realize that they need to improve their posture when they get muscular or joint pain or have an injury.

This is a regular error with most fitness and gym goers and sportsmen!

Posture needs attention and improvement first, before you go into fitness training, sports etc... otherwise there is a very good chance that your posture will deteriorate and cause aches and pains in the future.

"Children need to be taught at a very young age the importance of posture and must be gently corrected so that it develops into a good habit from childhood. However, it's never too late. One can start correcting one's posture at any age. The sooner the better."

## A FEW TIPS TO GET STARTED:

1. To improve a rounded thoracic / dorsal spine, lift your chest up first, then relax shoulders without dropping your chest.
2. Elongate your vertebral column towards the ceiling, by imagining a thread in the center of your head, pulling you up to the ceiling. The face at this point must be looking straight forward without taking the chin up or down.
3. Make sure that your lower back has a normal arch, it must not be over arched or rounded.
4. Feel the use of your back and abdominal muscles, while you sit upright.
5. Do not tense your shoulders or push them back with force. This will cause neck and shoulder tension and pain.
6. Of course, one is unable to maintain an upright posture

throughout the day, since muscles get tired after a while. In that case, lean back into the back of your chair or sofa. Making sure that your buttocks are right into the chair or sofa. Now maintain a good posture and take support of the back of the chair. What's important is not be rounded all the time. However a few occasions in the day are ok to round the back, as far as you try to maintain a good posture 70 % of the time during the day.

**IMPORTANT** - Some of the above tips will vary if you have a back and / or neck problems and also according to each individual's posture

## A FEW ALTERATIONS AT HOME OR OFFICE CAN DO WONDERS:

1. Your sofa must be firm. Not soft. Soft sofa's round the lower back. Regular rounding of the lower back will lead to muscular imbalances and cause aches and pains in joints and muscles. Disc herniation's is commonly caused due to a poor posture and regular rounding of the lower back.
2. Use a Swiss / Gym ball adapted to your height, to sit. One finds balls of diameter 45, 55, 65 and 75 cms. Take professional advice before choosing one for your children or yourself. They are excellent to improve posture and to reduce tension in the lower back and hips due to prolonged sitting.
3. Start with 5 mins on the Swiss / Gym ball as you work in the office or at home in front of the computer. Alternate with the chair for the next 5 mins. Keep alternating for a few weeks for 5 mins only. To let the muscles get used to the change slowly. Increase duration slowly, from 5, 10 to 15 to 20 mins. Do not sit on the ball for too long otherwise the postural muscles will get too tired. Be gentle with your body no matter what age when you are making changes or it can result in injury.
4. Gently bouncing on the Swiss / Gym ball helps to release tension from the lower back and hips due to prolonged sitting. Very important - keep your feet firmly attached to the floor.
5. Would be great if schools, homes and offices could have Swiss / Gym balls for children and adults to sit on. You can recommend this idea to your school or office.
6. Stand or walk (even better) when you get a phone call. To mobilize the hips and other joints.
7. Be active in school or office. Use the stairs not the elevators. Keep your printer in another room so you get up from your desk.
8. Drink water regularly, another great reason to get up from your desk.

9. Do not sit for long durations. Take regular breaks to walk. Stand and work sometimes if you can.
10. It is not easy to remember many of these points when we are busy at school or work. Therefore, using pop up's on the computer or little messages., will help you to develop new habits for the better.
11. Change takes time. Be patient and persistent.
12. Strengthening, mobilizing and stretching of the muscles which are causing poor posture can help tremendously to improve posture and therefore also benefit from the advantages of good upright posture mentioned above in this article. Consult a posture and exercise specialist, to help you improve your posture.

**IMPORTANT** - Some of the above tips will vary if you have a back and / or neck problems and also according to each individual's posture.

## THE FOLLOWING TOOLS HELP TO IMPROVE POSTURE AND AVOID FUTURE ACHES AND PAINS DUE TO POOR POSTURE:

- Education
- Swiss Ball Training
- Medicinal Ball Training
- Hatha Yoga Postures
- Foam Rollers
- Free hand exercises
- Resistant training

However, a professional needs to decide what tools are best for you and in what combination. Each person is different, with a different posture, work environment, habits, stress levels, medical history... therefore the exercise program must be tailor-made. The same exercises cannot work for everyone.

Your regular efforts and a good corrective exercise program will surely lead to great results for an improved and upright posture.

Be regular with your efforts and your exercises. Consistency and patience is the key.

Good Luck!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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