

Eight (8) Reasons to Have Good Posture

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"A good stance and posture reflect a proper state of mind"

- Morihei Ueshiba

Your parents were right - **Posture is Important!**

"Sit up straight!" "Don't slouch!" - I'm sure we've all heard those admonishing words more than once from our mother when we were growing up. And most of us begrudgingly complied with her command having no concept of the anatomical and biomechanical rationale behind her persistent prodding. In fact she probably wasn't aware of all the implications of poor posture herself. But somehow, some way your mother always seemed to know best.

Think about it. The first thing you notice about people is not their eyes, not their hair, not even their clothes. It's their posture. And it screams messages about who they are. Someone who stands erect gives off an aura of pride and self-confidence, while someone who slumps and stoops looks like he's ashamed to be taking up space.

Yet looks aren't the best reason to improve your posture. Health is. What begins as merely an unsightly stance or carriage can lead to authentic health problems if not corrected.

But what is good posture anyway and why is it so important? Basically posture refers to the body's alignment and positioning with respect to the ever-present force of gravity. Whether we are standing, sitting or lying down gravity exerts a force on our joints, ligaments and muscles. Good posture entails distributing the force of gravity through our body so no one structure is overstressed.

So, here are eight more reasons to have a 'correct' healthy posture:

1. Portrays a better, more **confident** image.

Good posture will boost self-confidence. Try this: take a deep breath and stand straight. Do you feel better? More confident?

Also look around a crowded dining area or cafeteria some time, and notice how many people are hunched over their meals. Then try to spot someone who's sitting tall in their seat, raising their fork or spoon to their mouth instead of pitching forward to grab the next bite. Doesn't that look more elegant? Which person looks poised and confident to you?

2. **Breathing** becomes easier and deeper.

Try this: sit down and bend over and try to breathe in. Notice how it is harder to breathe. This is an extreme example of how our muscles and tendons get over restricted and cause a lessening of depth and ease in breathing.

People are often asked to sit up straight. This rarely has permanent effect because by the time someone needs to be reminded to do so, their body has adapted to be more comfortable in the slouching position. When they attempt to sit up "straight" they actually tighten the already over-shortened frontal muscles and tendons and this causes restrictions in the ease of breathing volume; tightening these muscles even slightly to make oneself more erect causes tightness in the entire upper body and reduces the ease of deeper breathing.

We intuitively do not like this and soon adjust back to where it was easier to breathe. That is why most people that are advised to sit up straight, remain erect for only a few minutes before reverting to the former slouch where breathing is a little easier. *Their breathing is still held back from being fully deep, easy and balanced* For them it becomes easier and more what they have become accustomed to.

Often what we perceive as satisfactory is a lack of adequate understanding.

3. Improves **circulation and digestion**.

Good posture increases lung capacity, aiding oxygen transport and nutrition around the body. Upright open posture also allows more room in the abdominal cavity, this improves your health by allowing your organs to function more easily.

4. Makes you look slimmer and younger.

When having a good posture you will instantly take off 3-5 lbs in your appearance. It will also make you look slimmer, younger and your clothes will look better.

5. Your voice will sound better If you maintain good posture when you speak, and are careful not to let your chest "collapse" as you exhale, your diaphragm will open, making your voice sound better.

6. Help your muscles and joints.

Good posture helps us keep bones and joints in correct alignment so that our muscles are used correctly, decreasing the abnormal wearing of joint surfaces that could result in degenerative arthritis and joint pain. It also reduces the stress on the ligaments holding the spinal joints together, minimizing the likelihood of injury.

A good posture allows muscles to work more efficiently, allowing the body to use less energy and, therefore, preventing muscle fatigue. It also helps prevent muscle strain, overuse disorders, and even back and muscular pain.

7. Change your frame of **mind**.

Posture also affects your frame of mind and your frame of mind can affect your posture. So, when you are well, feeling happy and on top of things, posture tends to be upright and open. In contrast, people who are depressed and in chronic pain, often sit or stand slumped.

Next time you feel depressed or you're anxious about something try changing your posture, stand up straight and breathe deeply. Good posture in sitting and standing makes it easier to breathe fully and naturally, helping both relaxation and concentration, many Eastern practices such as yoga and tai-chi work on posture.

8. Healthy spine

Correct posture is a simple but very important way to keep the many intricate structures in the back and spine healthy. Back support is especially important for people who spend many hours sitting in an office chair or standing throughout the day.

Not maintaining good posture and adequate back support can add strain to muscles and put stress on the spine. Over time, the stress of poor posture can change the anatomical characteristics of the spine, leading to the possibility of constricted blood vessels and nerves.

To achieve good posture you must make it a habit by keeping your shoulders back, abdomen pulled in, your head lifted and chin parallel to the ground. This won't be easy if you are not used to it because you will have to build the muscles that keep your body in the correct position. It will take patience and practice. When you make a decision to work on your posture don't expect it to happen overnight but rest assured it will improve and you will see and feel the difference.

So, what are you waiting for? Start improving your posture right now!

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