

# Posture - How Important Is It?

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Posture is one aspect of our lives many of us have completely ignored since that day our mothers stopped telling us to “sit up straight” as children. Yet, it is the very nature of our posture which determines our state of health and physical appearance.

It is quite easy to begin appreciating the effects of posture as we look and observe the posture of those around us. Throughout our lives we recognize how well the people look who have good posture. We remember the uncle with the large pot belly and how it causes him to lean backwards as he walks, or the grandmother who has the bent back that won't allow her to straighten up.

The foundation for our posture is the spinal column. Spinal curves, as viewed from the side, develop over time. These normal curves begin to take shape even before we're born, and continue to progress through childhood. The spine as seen from behind should normally be straight. Scoliosis is a condition in which the spine forms abnormal curvatures. In its worse form scoliosis can cause heart and lung disorders. Few cases of scoliosis are life threatening but many times do cause altered posture, muscle tension and back pain. Although no clear evidence exists boasting a cure for scoliosis, these are effective forms of treatment to improve spinal health and posture. Some of these therapies include stretching, exercise and chiropractic manipulative therapy.

Postural signs indicating the presence of abnormal spinal posture include unequal shoulder or hip height, head tilt, unequal leg lengths or a shoulder blade which protrudes out more than the other. Suspicious findings indicated the need for further evaluation.

Other causes of faulty posture are muscular imbalances. Weakened muscles produce faulty body movement and posture. Common weak muscles include the abdominal, the gluteals and neck muscles. Shortened or tight muscles produce similar problems. These might include the calves, hamstrings, groin and lower back muscles. Other health problems such as obesity, foot problems, fatigue or back pain produce poor posture. Bad posture can cause other problems too; like impaired circulation, poor digestion and chronic fatigue syndromes. One of the best aspects of posture is the ability to improve it.

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