

# HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

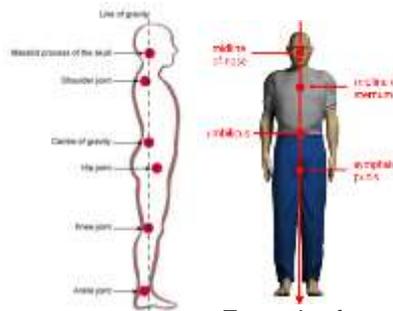
The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter  
[www.astate.edu/conhp](http://www.astate.edu/conhp)



## Correct Posture Awareness

### Introduction

Posture can be understood as the position in which you hold your body during different activities. Our habits shape our body. For students, we sit at desks hunched over for hours while listening to lectures and reading text books. In the workplace we practice poor body mechanics- sitting, lifting objects, or spending hours on the computer. It is smart to be aware of the health impact of these habits.



From the front view, the left and right side of the body should be symmetrical.

### How to stand properly:

- Bear weight primarily on the balls of your feet.
- Keep knees slightly bent.
- Keep feet shoulder-width apart.
- Let your arms hang naturally down by the sides of your body.
- Stand straight and tall with your shoulders pulled back.
- Tuck your stomach in.
- Keep your head level; earlobes should be in line with your shoulders.

### How to sit properly:

- Keep your feet on the floor or on a footrest.
- Avoid crossing your legs.
- Keep a small gap between the back of your knees and the front of your seat.
- Your knees should be at or below the level of your hips.

### What is Ideal Posture?

“Normal” erect posture is one in which the line of gravity runs through the ear lobe, shoulder joint, lower back, posterior to the hip joint, anterior to the knee joint, and anterior to the ankle.

- Adjust the backrest of your chair to support your back.
- Relax your shoulders and keep your forearms parallel to the ground.
- Avoid sitting in the same position for long periods of time- get up and move!

### Effects of poor posture

Poor posture may worsen the following:

- Aging
- Appearance
- Arthritis & Degenerative Joint Disease
- Back pain
- Balance & fall risk
- Breathing
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Confidence & attitude
- Energy level
- Flexibility
- Foot pain
- Joint & knee pain
- Neck pain & headaches
- Shoulder pain
- Sleep
- Sports performance
- Stress & anxiety
- Workplace productivity

### Benefits

Posture has an impact on your overall health. Here is a list of some reasons to make posture a priority:

- Pain-free movement and flexibility
- Better balance and coordination
- Higher energy level
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Optimism and positive attitude
- Peak athletic performance
- Ability to breathe deeply
- More youthful appearance
- Staying active longer

### Tips to Improve Posture

The key to improving poor posture is to find the cause and correct it! Here are a couple categories that can lead to poor posture:

#### **Poor ergonomics in the workplace**

- Position computer screen directly in front of you to maintain a level head. If your work surface is too high, your neck, shoulders, arms, and hands will become strained. If too low, your back will become rounded, decreasing the natural curves of the spine.
- The height of the keyboard should permit your arms to slope downward slightly.
- If you are on the phone for long periods of time, use a speaker system or alternate between ears.
- Take breaks to reduce muscular tension and stress.

#### **Tightness and weakness in certain muscle groups**



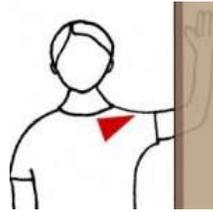
With poor posture, muscles of the chest and upper back/neck are generally tight. On the other hand, the abdominals, gluteus muscles, and stabilizers of the back tend to be weak.

Blue= weak  
Red= tight

Rule of thumb: Stretch what is tight. Strengthen what is weak!

#### **Here are a few stretches and exercises to improve posture:**

1. Stretch the chest by placing forearm on the doorway and stepping forward until a stretch is felt in the chest. Hold for 30 seconds.

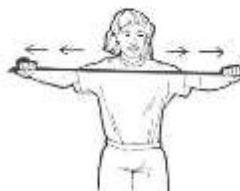


2. Strengthen your transverse abdominis by sucking your belly in as far as you can and hold for 10 to 15 seconds. Make sure you are pulling your abs in as they meet your back.

3. Another good exercise to strengthen the core (and many other muscles) is a plank. Be sure that your body forms a straight line from your shoulders to ankles! Hold for 30 seconds or for as long as your muscles tolerate.



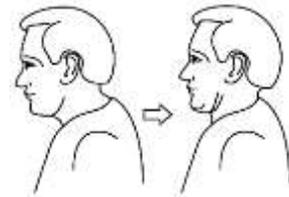
4. Begin by holding a band in front of your body. As you stretch the band, squeeze your shoulder blades together. This is a great exercise to strengthen the stabilizers of the back. Repeat this exercise 10-15 times.



5. Begin by laying on your stomach. Simultaneously, bring up your arms and legs by using the muscles of your back. Hold for about 5 seconds and repeat 10-15 times.



6. Have your back firmly supported in a chair or against a wall. Look straight ahead and slowly move your chin back and slightly down so your ears are in line with your shoulders. Hold for a few seconds and repeat 10-15 times.



#### **References**

- <http://posturemonth.org>
- <http://www.physio-pedia.com/Posture>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4301231/>
- <http://synergyclinic.net/upper-cross-and-lower-cross-syndromes/>

#### **Other News:**

\*\*If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu).

\*\*\*\*\*

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu). Produced by Karinda Polk, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.