

## Tips for Improving Posture

by Dr.\_Michael\_Tobey

### Healthy by Choice, Not by Chance

Tips for improving posture Over time, poor posture may be caused by habits from everyday activities such as sitting in office chairs, looking at the computer, driving, standing for long periods of time, or even sleeping. Poor posture can easily become second nature, causing or aggravating episodes of back pain and damaging spinal structures. Fortunately, the main factors affecting posture and ergonomics are completely within one's ability to control and are not difficult to change. The following guidelines suggest several ways to improve posture and ergonomics, especially for people who work sitting in an office chair for most of the day. Increase awareness of posture and ergonomics in everyday settings. Being aware of posture and ergonomics at work, at home, and at play is a vital step towards instilling good posture and ergonomic techniques. This includes making conscious connections between episodes of back pain and specific situations where poor posture or ergonomics may be the root cause of the pain. Know the warning signs of back pain caused by poor ergonomics and posture. Back pain may be the result of poor ergonomics and posture if the back pain is worse at certain times of day or week (such as after a long day of sitting in an office chair in front of a computer, but not during the weekends); pain that starts in the neck and moves downwards into the upper back, lower back and extremities; pain that goes away after switching positions while sitting or standing; sudden back pain that is experienced with a new job, a new office chair, or a new car; and/or back pain that comes and goes for months. Get up and move. As muscles tire, slouching, slumping, and other poor postures become more likely; this in turn puts extra pressure on the neck and back. In order to maintain a relaxed yet supported posture, change positions frequently. One way is to take a break from sitting in an office chair every half hour for two minutes in order to stretch, stand, or walk. Use exercise to help prevent injury and promote good posture. Regular exercise such as walking, swimming, or bicycling will help the body stay aerobically conditioned, while specific strengthening exercises will help the muscles surrounding the back to stay strong. These benefits of exercise promote good posture, which will, in turn, further help to condition muscles and prevent injury. There are also specific exercises that will help maintain good posture. In particular, a balance of trunk strength with back muscles about 30% stronger than abdominal muscles is essential to help support the upper body and maintain good posture.

*Tips for Improving Posture by Dr.\_Michael\_Tobey*