

trouble sleeping, an inability to focus, lingering feelings of sadness and anger or an overwhelming sense of isolation or fear. These are all red flags that depression may have taken hold.

The psychologists, social workers and other mental health professionals at survivorship programs are trained to identify and treat cancer-related complications, such as fatigue and pain, that may contribute to depression. In addition, therapy and/or medication may be needed to treat the depression.

• **Additional postcancer issues.**

Cancer-survivorship programs also treat sexual dysfunction...cognitive decline...and sleep problems.

**RISKS FOR RECURRENCE**

Up to 70% of cancer survivors report having significant fear of a cancer recurrence. If you have survived cancer, the best way to catch a recurrence early—when the malignancy would be most treatable—is to stay on top of follow-up visits to your doctors.

**How often?** Follow-up visits are generally recommended every three to four months for the first few years following treatment and once or twice annually after that. However, the exact schedule depends on such factors as the type of cancer you had, the treatments you received and your age.

**Which tests?** It's crucial to have an after-cancer screening plan that may include specific tests (such as blood tests and MRI and/or CT scans) that are sometimes used to help detect cancer recurrences.

**BEST RESOURCE:** Guidelines from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. Go to [NCCN.org/default.aspx](http://NCCN.org/default.aspx). Under "NCCN Guidelines," click on "NCCN Guidelines for Patients." **BLH**

**Connect with Us!**



"Like" us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/BottomLineHealth](http://Facebook.com/BottomLineHealth)



Follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/BLLineHealth](http://Twitter.com/BLLineHealth)

Steven Weiniger, DC

# Is Your Head Where It Should Be?

You almost certainly have this posture problem. Here's how to fix it...

**A**re you part of the poor-posture epidemic? It's estimated that two out of every three American adults now have *forward head posture* (FHP), an increasingly common condition in which the head juts out past the shoulders, placing excessive stress on the neck and back.

FHP can be caused by such simple things as texting, driving or even the type of glasses you wear, but it can trigger a surprisingly wide variety of troubling health conditions—from neck, back and shoulder pain...to headaches, digestive issues, breathing difficulties and even arthritis. *Good news:* FHP can often be corrected with simple exercises and lifestyle changes.

**WHAT CAUSES FHP**

A main culprit of FHP is frequent computer use—people tend to lean forward in an effort to see their computer screens. Texting is another common cause, as most people hunch over their smartphones.

**OTHER TRIGGERS INCLUDE:** Bucket seats in cars—they encourage an unnatural bend in the body...reading or watching TV while on an exercise machine at the gym—straining to see the page or screen forces the head out of alignment...bifocals—these glasses force you to tilt your head backward and stick your chin out in order to see through the lower portion of the lenses...carrying a heavy backpack—the load causes your head to protrude forward...and the natural process of aging—

as the neck muscles weaken, the head drifts forward.

**STARTLING FACT:** Every inch that your head moves forward past your spine adds *10 pounds of pressure* to the neck and back, which often leads to muscle and joint pain and headaches. A forward-hanging head also compresses the rib cage, compromising the lungs' ability to expand by as much as 30% and slowing down digestion. What's more, over time, FHP can cause the spine to stiffen, limiting range of motion and contributing to osteoarthritis.

**RECENT STUDY:** When more than 800 adults over age 65 were followed for about five years, those who began leaning forward at an earlier age were 3.5 times more likely to require assistance bathing, dressing, eating and getting in and out of chairs than those who started leaning forward later.

**EASY TO SELF-DIAGNOSE**

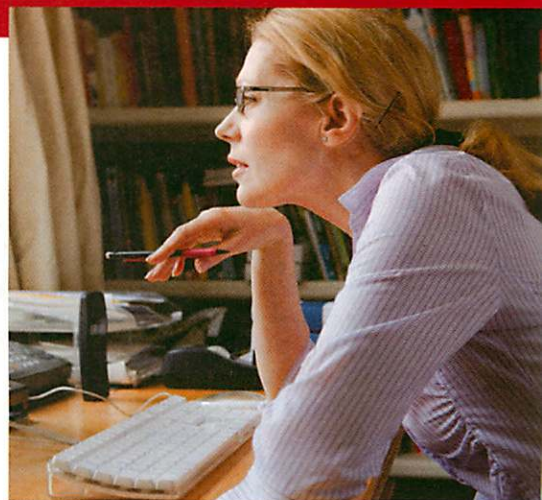
A simple photo is often all you need to determine whether you have FHP. Put on some gym clothes >>

*Bottom Line/Health* interviewed...

**Steven Weiniger, DC**, a member of the postgraduate faculty at Logan University in Chesterfield, Missouri, and managing partner of *BodyZone.com*, a national online health information resource and referral directory for posture-exercise professionals. A past delegate to the White House Conference on Aging, he lectures widely on posture and exercise and is the author of *Stand Taller, Live Longer: An Anti-Aging Strategy* (BodyZone).



Title photo: Thinkstock/Jupiterimages



## Health Discoveries

### ■ New use for good vibrations!

A small capsule that vibrates after it's swallowed is being developed as an alternative to laxatives. The experimental capsule stimulates intestinal contractions and doubles the number of bowel movements—without side effects.



### ■ Playtime for stem

**cells.** The silicone that gives the molding toy Silly Putty its “stretch” forms a pliable surface that could make it easier to transform cells into stem cells, which may help treat spinal

cord injuries, Alzheimer's disease and more.

■ **Sexy voice tricks.** Women increase their sexual allure by speaking in a low, husky voice. Men who try the same trick are rated as *less* appealing, according to attractiveness tests.



### ■ Glucosamine

**to the rescue.** When mice were given this popular supplement, their life spans were extended by 10%. *Reason:* Glucosamine, often used for joint health, improves glucose metabolism.

■ **No more pills and shots?** Experimental drug-loaded microchips could safely deliver daily doses of medication, possibly for years. Doses can be changed or stopped by remote control.

■ **Bullying is bad for the body, too.** Depression and other psychological scars have long been known to affect adults who were bullied in childhood. *Now:* Bullying is being linked to chronic inflammation that causes pain and vulnerability to illness in adulthood.

### ■ Circumcision for prostate

**cancer?** In a recent study, men circumcised after age 35 were 45% less likely to develop prostate cancer than uncircumcised men. The reason is unknown, but the link was most apparent in black men, who have higher rates of the disease than white men.

Sources: The Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center | University of Michigan | *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* | ETH Zurich | Massachusetts Institute of Technology | *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* | University of Montreal

» and stand as you normally would in a straight but not stiff position. Then have a spouse or friend snap a full-length photo of you from the side. Look at the photo—the middle of your ear should be lined up with your shoulder, hipbone and ankle. If your head is forward, the alignment of your body is off. Save the photo as a baseline, and have a photo taken monthly to monitor your progress once you begin using the strategies below.

### HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

• **Become more aware of your head position.** Lying down on the floor, flat on your back, take a moment to notice where your gaze naturally falls—if you have FHP, you will likely be looking slightly back and away from your feet (those who have healthy posture will be looking straight up at the ceiling).

**TO RECOGNIZE THE PROPER HEAD POSITION:** While still lying on your back, gently lift your head just off the floor and tuck in your chin to give yourself a slight double chin. Then, keeping your chin tucked, put your head back down. If you're looking straight up at the ceiling, your head is now in the proper “level-head” position.

Take five slow breaths here, then relax on the floor for two to three minutes to let your head align with your torso and pelvis. Do this two to three times a day to help retrain your body. If you have discomfort in your low back, put a small pillow under your knees.

• **Perform chin tucks every day.** Initially, do these exercises on the floor. Lying down in the level-head position, take a deep breath in... while exhaling, press your chin into a tuck. Release and repeat for five cycles, two to three times a day.

If the stretch in the back of your neck feels too intense or you can't keep your head level, try propping your head up on an inch-thick book wrapped in a thin towel. (Use a book you don't want, since you're going to be removing pages.) After doing this exercise a few times a day for three or four days, remove

about an eighth of the pages. Repeat for a few more days and remove another small section of pages, continuing this cycle until the book is empty and your head is flat on the ground.

As chin tucks become easier, you don't have to do them lying down and can do them regularly throughout the day—at your computer or even walking down the street.

• **Make other changes to your daily routine.** The average American logs about 11 hours of screen time per day—including time spent on computers, using smartphones and watching TV. At work and at home, make sure your computer screen is at eye level. If you use a laptop, use a laptop stand and purchase a separate keyboard. When using a smartphone for texting or e-mail, try to hold it at eye level. When wearing bifocals for reading, adjust the glasses on your nose rather than changing your head position. These strategies will help keep your ears in line with your shoulders and may even help prevent wrinkles caused by squinting.

And before driving, be sure the seat is not tilted excessively backward—this forces you to hold your head at an angle that contributes to FHP.

• **Use a cervical pillow for sleeping.** Cervical pillows improve spinal alignment by cradling the head and supporting the neck, usually with an indentation or cutout in the middle of the pillow. You may need to try several pillows before finding the one that's most comfortable for you. I like the cervical pillows by Therapeutica (*TherapeuticaInc.com*) and Tempur-Pedic (*TempurPedic.com*) and the Chiroflow Water Pillow (*Chiroflow.com*).

If after two to four weeks of trying these strategies you're still experiencing health problems related to FHP, be sure to see a chiropractor or physical therapist. **BLH**

Easy-to-do chin tucks immediately improve the alignment of your neck.