

Did You Do Your Posture Exercise Today? – STEP 1

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by Renee North, Certified Posture Exercise Professional (CPEP) and personal trainer (NASM)

Take a look at how hours of computer hunching, slouching while cell phone texting and video-game slumping is affecting your posture. It is not just kids with backpacks or cane-carrying seniors – studies show poor posture is a major cause of back and neck pain for all ages and over time often contributes to digestive and cardiopulmonary problems. The good news: There are two easy steps people can do to strengthen posture and we are going to focus on them within the next two issues.

STEP 1 - Take a Posture Picture

The first step to improving posture is finding out what your posture looks like. Dr. Steven Weiniger, author of Stand Taller~Live Longer, An Anti-Aging Strategy: 10 Minutes a Day to Keep Your Body Active and Pain-Free, suggests this easy way to check your posture with any digital camera. Have a friend take three pictures of you: From the front, back, and side. Stand straight and tall when they take the picture, with what feels like good posture (No looking in a mirror to cheat). Print out the pictures, one to a sheet. Next, put a dot between your feet on the front and back view, and on your ankle on the side view, and then fold each paper in half vertically, neatly at the dot.

Front and Back View: The two halves of your body should be the same. If your head and/or torso is off to one side, or your arms are hanging differently (one hand is lower or further from the body than the other), your posture is not symmetrical.

Side View: The line from your ankle should pass thru your shoulder and ear. If your head is way forward of that line, you may have a posture distortion called Forward Head Posture (FHP).

File your posture picture where you can find it. Next year take another posture picture to note any changes. Your posture is how the world sees you, and a bit of effort at strengthening your posture is an anti-aging habit to make you look and feel better, avoid injury, and exercise effectively to stay active and age well. Please look in our next issue for the second step you can take to strengthen posture.



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Did You Do Your Posture Exercise Today? – STEP 2

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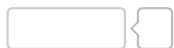
The first step to strengthen your posture was discussed in an earlier issue.

STEP 2: Do Posture Strengthening Exercises

All exercise is not created equal. Exercising with poor posture can train you to stand and move poorly. Yoga, Tai-Chi, and Pilates are all great for building body awareness and control. According to Dr. Weiniger, a smart way to exercise efficiently and get the most out of any workout is with a pre-exercise "posture break" to set your internal baseline. Before taking a walk or hitting the gym Weiniger recommends these posture strengthening exercises:

STORK - Train yourself to stand tall while building good posture by balancing on one foot. First, stand tall with your best posture, and then keep straight as you lift your thigh so your knee is at hip height. Keep standing tall for 30 seconds on each side, focusing on keeping your body well aligned.

WALLSTAND - Back up to a wall so your heels, buttocks, shoulders and head all lightly touch the wall while you keep everything level, relaxed and aligned – take three slow breaths, feeling your body's best posture. Note: If you feel any areas of stress, get your posture checked by a professional.



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