

Make One Change

MY POSTURE problem began at puberty when I witnessed the unwelcome arrival of womanly attributes on my tomboy chest. That was the start of a self-induced slump that lasted until college.

Post-college, the rounded shoulders gradually returned after I started an office job. I didn't give my hunching much thought until my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. As part of her treatment, she met with a physical therapist who encouraged her to sit as straight as possible because slouching compresses the lungs and makes the heart work harder. Additionally, correct posture—by enhancing breathing and reinforcing your optimal physical alignment—can ease pain, reduce strain on muscles and joints, and increase energy. Now I'm committed to standing straight everyday. Here's how:

Take a breath test. For a visceral sensation of the benefits of good posture, try this experiment from Z. Annette Iglarsh, PT., Ph.D., professor of physical therapy at Simmons College in Boston. Sit or stand normally, then drop your chin toward your chest and take a breath. Now stand or sit up straight and take another. If you're like me, you'll be surprised at the depth of that second breath.



LEARN MORE: For other simple things you can do to make life better, go to naturalhealthmag.com/makeonechange.



Get it straight

Good posture is the secret to more energy, less pain, and a healthy heart.

By SIMONE SAMANO

head in line with my spine and take stress off my neck. I wear supportive shoes like Keen's and take a break from heels to help my spine align. I also sleep on a firm mattress and maintain a healthy weight since extra pounds strain abdomen muscles.

Be patient. Developing good posture takes time. But, if progress is too slow, visit a chiropractor (amerchiro.org) or find an Alexander Technique teacher (alexander-tech.org) who can help you regain your natural poise. 🌿

Start now. Slumping muscles are never too far gone, says chiropractor Steven P. Weiniger of bodyzone.com and author of *Stand Taller—Live Longer* (BodyZone Press, 2008). "Posture can be strengthened by adding daily exercises that promote moving well and standing strong."

Do this exercise. I devote just one minute, three times a day, to an easy exercise from Weiniger: Stand straight, tighten your stomach, and lift one knee up at a right angle to your body. Hold it for 30 seconds or less, bracing on a wall if needed. Then repeat the exercise on the other side. It helps restore balance to my body and strengthen my core.

Adopt these habits. I change positions every 15 minutes; sitting or standing in one position too long tires muscles. I keep my chin parallel to the ground to keep my