

WORKING OUT 24/7, STILL NO RESULTS? BIG PAYOFFS—FINALLY!

*Flip Over for Beauty Bonus!*

# Women's Health

**20  
EASY WAYS  
TO LOOK  
HOT NOW**

\*Tight Butt?  
Oh, Yeah!

**EVA  
MENDES**  
A Baby, This Bod,  
That Boyfriend  
(Gosling!)

**Epic  
Orgasms**  
#GuyOptional

**DROP 5  
POUNDS**

Eat Your  
Way to a  
Smaller Size

**The Single Best  
Anti-Ager Most  
Women Skip**

# Hey, Girl!

YOU'LL OWN SPRING IN THE COOLEST SHOES, BAGS, JEWELRY, AND MORE

**Outsmart Allergies**  
How Top Docs Get Instant Relief

April 2015  
\$5.99 CAN/DISPLAY UNTIL APRIL 21, 2015



WomensHealthMag.com



## In a Slump?

Check your posture. Slouching can kill your mood, your confidence, even—nooooo!—your sex life. Time to stand (and sit) corrected.

By Meghan Rabbitt

Damn you, *Game of Thrones*: Hunching over a laptop for hours on end or camping out on a couch is murder on your spine and shoulders. But now research shows the damage goes well beyond an aching back. “Poor posture can mess with your breathing, put your hormones in flux, and cause your energy levels to tank,” says chiropractor Steven Weiniger, D.C., author of *Stand Taller—Live Longer*. In other words, it can make you look *and* feel like a hot mess. Here’s why, plus a head-to-toe guide to straightening out your bod—and life—for good.

### Why You Should Get in Line

Because saggy shoulders are more than unattractive. They can...

#### 1/ STEAL YOUR CALM

Think lounging equals relaxation? Nope. Though it’s not known why, your body responds to hunkered-down poses by unleashing the stress hormone cortisol (hello, tension) and putting the kibosh on testosterone (so long, confidence). Next time you start to slide, do some “manspreading.” Clasp your hands behind your head with your elbows out, or put your legs up on a desk. Such stances can curb cortisol, up testosterone, and help you keep your cool in nail-biting

situations, says Harvard University doctoral candidate Caroline Wilmuth.

#### 2/ BUM YOU OUT

People who walk-while-wilting are more likely to feel depressed than those who walk more erectly, per a San Francisco State University study. Turns out, your brain takes cues from your posture: Move in a happy, confident way and your mood will follow suit. You don’t have to bound around like a puppy; simply standing straight can make you feel less sluggish.

### 3/ HIJACK YOUR FOCUS

When you collapse like a rag doll, your ribs can press into your diaphragm, limiting how much oxygen you're able to suck in, which can cloud your mind. "Over time, your lung capacity could be impacted," says Weiniger. To see what we mean, take a deep breath while crunched over. Now take one while bolt-upright. Ta-da! Unimpeded breathing means air can reach and more fully inflate the lowest portion of your lungs, from which blood vessels carry O<sub>2</sub> throughout the body, lending you extra energy and concentration.

### 4/ CAUSE A PAIN IN THE... EVERYWHERE

"When your spine is out of alignment, other muscles have to overcompensate, which can start a

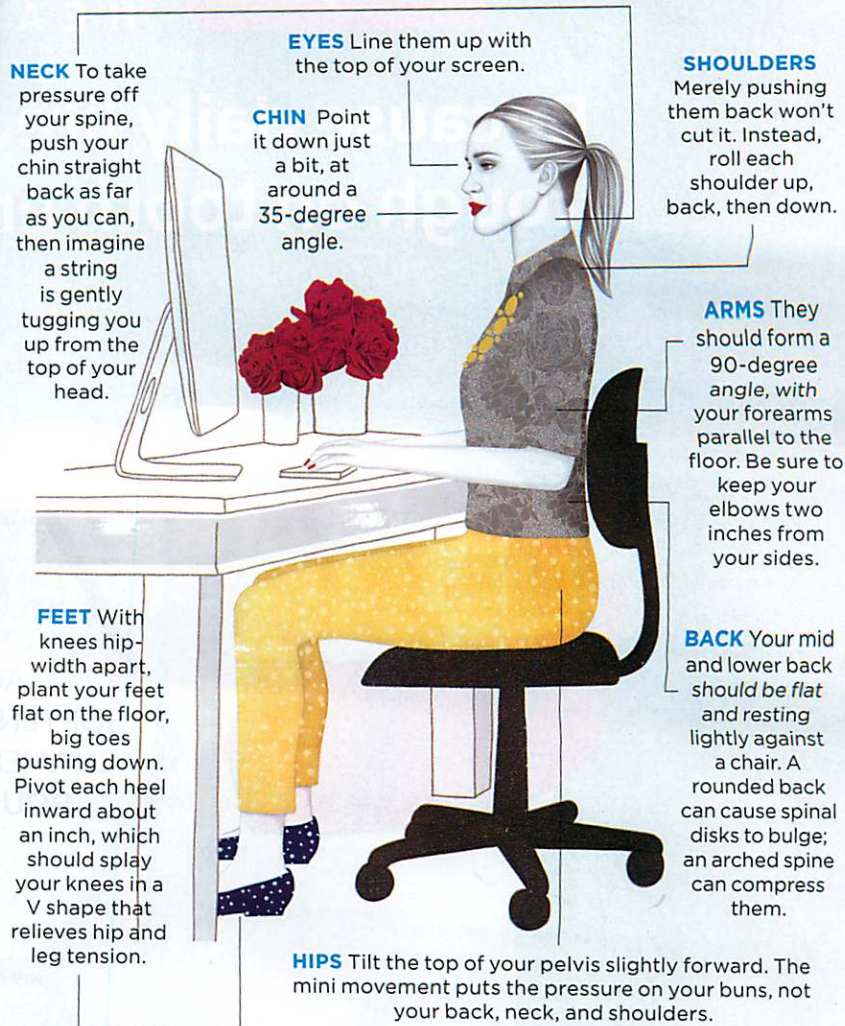
chain reaction of pain," says Mary Ann Wilmarth, P.T., chief of physical therapy at Harvard University Health Services. Scrunching your shoulders forces the upper back into a balancing act that can result in aches, muscle spasms, and pins and needles in your arms. Dude!

### 5/ TRAMPLE YOUR MOJO

If your libido's gone AWOL, consider this: Stooping is often directly tied to a weak core—a situation that doesn't throw you any bones in the bedroom. The softer your middle, the limper your arousal can be, says sexual health expert Debby Herbenick, Ph.D. So before hitting La Perla, try sweating your sexy—and stance—back in shape (see "Support System," below).

## BACK ON TRACK

The average American sits for some 13 hours per day—and the "knees together, chest out" advice most of us follow is outdated, says posture guru Esther Gokhale. Pull up an ergonomic chair and strike this pose.



### Support System

You gotta move well to sit pretty. These exercises will counter the side effects of sagging and prime you for better posture.

**Hip Action** Long stints on your keister can shorten your hip flexors, the muscles in your pelvis that keep your hips and back in line, says Eric Robertson, P.T., of the American Physical Therapy Association. When you stand, those compressed muscles can tug on your spine, causing mega-aches in your hips and back. To relengthen them, do a daily round of deep lunges: Step forward with your right foot and lower your hips until both knees form 90-degree angles. Hold for three seconds, then return to standing. Repeat five times, then switch legs.

**Middle Management** Remember, a strong core is the foundation of good posture. Robertson recommends three 30-second planks each day. Add three daily sets of 12 seated rows on a stability ball: Sit on a ball, feet flat on the floor, and hold a five-pound dumbbell in each hand. Bend your elbows to 90 degrees and move your arms back as you squeeze your shoulder blades together. The instability makes your core work harder; the rows strengthen your upper back and shoulders.

**Neck Work** The slender column has to hold up about 10 pounds of head. Whenever you jut out your chin, that weight feels even heavier. "This puts a lot of extra strain on neck muscles," says Robertson. Keep them ready and able with daily chin tucks. Lie on your back and touch your chin to your chest. Hold three seconds, then relax. Repeat five times.

### STRAIGHT UP

Standing around at happy hour or stuck in an endless airport security line? There's a stance for that, too. First, take a page from the above chair pose—feet hip-width apart, shoulders back and down—then heed these extra pointers.

-1-

Spread your weight equally between both feet to form a solid base.

-2-

Keep a slight bend in your knees. Hyperextending them will cause your back to arch, which strains your shoulders and neck.

-3-

Point your chin down a little to keep your neck long. Talking to someone taller than you? Back up a few inches and look up with your eyes, not your entire head. ■