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**September 27, 2010**

## WELLNESS WEEKLY



### Sit Up Straight

Good posture and proper body mechanics are important throughout your life, especially if you have weak bones. "Body mechanics" refers to how you move throughout the day. Knowing how to move, sit and stand properly can help you stay active and prevent broken bones and disability. Proper posture can also help to limit the amount of kyphosis, or forward curve of the upper back, that can result from broken bones in the spine.

#### What is good posture?

Posture is the position in which you hold your body upright against gravity while standing, sitting or lying down. Good posture involves training your body to stand, walk, sit and lie in positions where the least strain is placed on supporting muscles and ligaments during movement or weight-bearing activities.

#### Proper Posture:

- Keeps bones and joints in the correct alignment so that muscles are being used properly.
- Helps decrease the abnormal wearing of joint surfaces that could result in arthritis.
- Decreases the stress on the ligaments holding the joints of the spine together.
- Prevents the spine from becoming fixed in abnormal positions.
- Prevents fatigue because muscles are being used more efficiently, allowing the body to use less energy.
- Prevents strain or overuse problems.
- Prevents backache and muscular pain.
- Contributes to a good appearance.

One of the most important things about body mechanics and posture is alignment. Alignment refers to how the head, shoulders, spine, hips, knees and ankles relate and line up with each other. Proper alignment of the body puts less stress on the spine and helps you have good posture.

To keep proper alignment, avoid the following positions or movements:

- Having a slumped, head-forward posture
- Bending forward from the waist
- Twisting of the spine to a point of strain
- Twisting the trunk and bending forward when doing activities such as coughing, sneezing, vacuuming or lifting
- Anything that requires you to reach far. An example is reaching up for items on high shelves.

#### Correct Sitting Position:

- Sit up with your back straight and your shoulders back. Your buttocks should touch the back of your chair.
- Distribute your body weight evenly on both hips.
- Bend your knees at a right angle. Keep your knees even with or slightly higher than your hips. (use a foot rest or stool if necessary). Your legs should not be crossed.
- Keep your feet flat on the floor.

If any of these guidelines cause an increase of pain do not continue the activity and seek the advice of a physician or physical therapist.