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## *PRINCIPLES OF PERFECT POSTURE*

### POSTURE PERFECT

Your mother was right when she told you to stand and sit up straight. Not only does proper posture help you appear healthier than a slouching frame, but also promotes better musculoskeletal and organ function. Try this: slouch forward and attempt to take a deep breath. Now, sit up straight and do the same. You will surely find that breathing is easier with proper posture. If breathing can be so influenced by posture, one can only imagine how other organ functions are affected. Also, improper posture excessively stretches [strains] or compresses joints and can lead to premature degenerative arthritis. The early symptom expression of excessive joint or soft tissue strain includes stiffness and aching pain after an activity or sustained posture, such as working at the computer.

When we view the posture from the **front**, are the points between the eyes, chin, breastbone, pubic area and midpoint between the ankles aligned? Are the shoulders, hips and knees of equal height? Is the head held straight, and not tilted or turned to one side?

When we view the posture from the **side**, can you easily see the three natural curves in the back? Is there a big curve in the low back? Is the curve in the mid-back very pronounced? Does the head stick out over the shoulders?

When we view the posture from the **back**, are the little bumps on the spine in a straight line down the center of the back? Is one shoulder higher than the other? Is one hip higher than the other?

### PATTERNS OF USE AND ABUSE

Neck and back pain sufferers commonly demonstrate predictable patterns of muscle imbalance. Some muscles tend to become excessively tight and overpowering, whereas others become weak and elongated. Subtle muscle imbalances may result in excessive joint and muscle strain, predisposing one to acute or repetitive strain injury [RSI]. Tight/overpowering muscles require stretching, whereas weak/elongated muscles require strengthening. The foundation of spinal health is stable postural control and normal neutral alignment.

### EFFECTS OF POOR POSTURE

A straight spine lacks optimal shock absorption and render the intervertebral discs vulnerable to injury. On the other hand, excessive spinal curves tend to over compress or stretch the more posterior spinal joints, known as facet joints. In either case, the supportive spinal muscles must work excessively to maintain an upright position and may result in muscle fatigue and pain.

### SPINAL CHECKUPS

The importance of good spinal hygiene is truly under appreciated. Like dental checkups are important for promoting healthy teeth and gums, spinal checkups are important for promoting good spinal health, proper function and balance of our muscular system.