

PAIN AND POSTURE GO HAND IN HAND

The Impact of Forward Head Posture

Other than acute injury or trauma, most of the mild discomfort or chronic pain felt in the neck, shoulders and back are contributed by adopting poor posture. This adoption of poor posture can start in our early childhood years and progressively develop over time into pain, discomfort and for some, debilitating illness. In Fig 1 we see on the left a good posture where we see the line running through the ear, middle of the shoulder, the hip and ankle if it was in view.

In Fig 2 we see that the head has migrated forward and the ear lobe does not line up. Every inch your head is forward in posture, you are adding an additional weight of your head. If your head posture is 3 inches forward from the correct position you will have added 3 times the normal weight, an additional 10 to 15 kg of load on the spinal column where the head and neck joins the back.

The effects are never felt immediately as neck and back problems develop over time and can start from a very early age, example: poor sitting posture at school. As a result of having a forward head posture and rounded shoulders, (Fig 2 No 3) the angle of the first rib gets depressed and then major organs in your body will get compressed and not be able to sit in their proper location and position. This then restricts them from proper healthy function and adds additional, un-necessary stress to your body and will affect your overall wellness, vitality and quality of life.

Quite often people will develop a fatty tissue deposit called a Dowagers Hump located where the neck meets the upper spine as the body attempts to stabilise the additional head weight. There is also a huge pressure exerted on the spinal cord, (Fig 2 No 2.) and its ability to carry messages and feelings is restricted and impaired to the point where we suffer severe problems. Other examples of areas effected by poor posture are, poor lymphatic drainage, poor circulation throughout your body, the pump system including the heart, diaphragm etc. The spine also houses the spinal cord which is an intricate sensory network that runs through the vertebrae to transmit feeling and movement commands from the brain throughout the entire body. When posture is poor we are putting pressure on the whole nervous system and this is extremely draining to our daily energy and vitality.

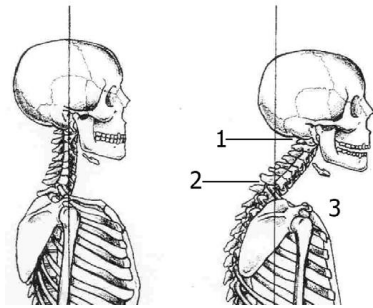


Fig 1

Fig 2

Correcting Poor Posture

If you have a forward head posture you will also have other related issues that will need to be addressed. The only way to correct poor posture is to treat the body as a whole. As a C.H.E.K. Practitioner we start with a comprehensive In-depth Postural and Orthopedic Analysis. From this assessment we can determine which muscles are tight, weak or long. Once your program has been designed to correct the imbalances in your body that are causing your discomforts or pain, you will begin to learn a specific stretching plan to stretch **"the tight muscles only"**. Upon mastering this we would move along to stabilise the spine and the weak muscles throughout the body that we found during the assessment.

This then moves into functional movement patterns that we do on a daily basis, to strengthen the body as a whole. This becomes the base of your strength and conditioning program to move you into other goals that you may want to achieve. These may include things such as body fat loss, muscle shape/tone, strength for home, work or sports. Our body is just like a car. We can be a vintage in great condition or a new model all beaten up and not running well. Age does not have to determine our condition. Prevention is always better than cure, if you have mild discomfort now, it will not correct itself, it will only amplify as time goes on.

Footnote

If you have imbalance in your body and you do a balanced fitness programme you will have no chance to correct the imbalance. Fixing muscle imbalance is very individualised. Your body needs to be coached out of imbalance through specific exercise as well as a re-education process that addresses every other area of your life, e.g.: sitting, walking, lifting, working positions etc. This is done at a neural, (brain) level. We have to re-educate the way that we think about our posture. NB.Forward Head Posture as an example and it is only one common postural dysfunction that is required to be treated in many people.

Back Pain

The most common source of back pain can be traced to muscle imbalance in the abdominal structure. With proper corrective strengthening exercises & re-education of the core musculature you can minimise or remove back pain related to poor core stability.