

Postural Syndrome



Being told to stand up straight is a rite of passage for most teenagers. New research is showing that there is more to gain from having good posture than just a healthy spine. Your posture and body language have now been shown to affect the way you feel.

Most people recognize that when you're unhappy or tired you naturally slouch and when you're feeling confident your shoulders are set back and you have a spring in your step.

What is more difficult to understand is that the reverse is also true. It seems that your posture can also affect your mood.

In a recent study, people who adopted a posture of confidence for two minutes before a job interview reported feeling more confident and actually performed better in the interview than people who adopted low confidence postures for the same period of time.

You already knew that a good posture could make you feel better but this adds a whole new dimension to the issue.

It also seems that you actually can run away from your problems. A study of college students suffering from mild to moderate depression showed improvement of their mood after starting a jogging program. When they were compared to students who took anti-depressants instead, they found the jogging students felt better quicker with fewer side effects.

By no means is exercise a replacement for supervised treatment, but it has a very useful place. Patients who combine high intensity exercise with other treatment types are also less likely to have recurring episodes of depression than those who don't.

So along with less pain, increased strength, lower risk of heart disease, obesity, diabetes and osteoporosis, you can add mental well being to the list of reasons to move well and stay active.

Poor posture is attributed to everyday life with increased use of laptops, smart phones and desk jobs in general. Of much concern are the numbers of young people we see who have postures normally seen in our more middle aged populations.

Prolonged static positions in less than optimal postures can result in pain arising from the mechanical deformation of soft-tissues and associated vascular insufficiency. Recent studies* suggest however that "Postural Syndrome" is a possible precursor for future more disabling or painful problems.

Slumped sitting is seen as the most provocative of positions, resulting in:

- reduced lordosis of the lumbar spine
- Increased kyphosis of the thoracic spine
- Protraction of the chin and increased lordosis of the cervical spine

In western societies it is estimated that 75% of work involves sitting so it is no wonder the high occurrence of chronic back and neck complaints, particularly as many leisure activities also involve sitting - TV, playstation, etc.

Adequate postural education and advice only goes so far. The secondary consequences of poor body position must be addressed:

- muscle imbalance; weak muscles cannot support the body adequately and will allow the body to adopt incorrect positions;
- Inflexible muscles; tightened muscles will reduce range of movement of joints and will provoke pain upon stretch
- Muscle fatigue; unconditioned muscles become less efficient at supporting the body

Our Clinical Approach:

A Movement Competency Screen

In addition to our usual in-depth assessment process, our therapists will use a MCS to consider patterns and sequences rather than isolated movements.

Key components:

1. Identify primary movement dysfunction.
2. Verify appropriate mobility.
3. Re-program the movement pattern

Five principal movement patterns are evaluated with additional special tests for the high level athletic populations. This provides the baseline for rehab exercise prescription and a re-grooving of a more efficient and effective movement competency.

Breathing

Breathing connects all part of the movement matrix and therefore movement dysfunction is a subtle and parallel indication of breathing dysfunction.

Our post-grad therapists are trained to observe and note unnecessary bracing, breath holding or breathing difficulties. For example, inappropriate muscular activity in and around the neck by muscles such as sternocleidomastoid and scalenes is also a good indicator. If the problem is “deep seated” and unresponsive to our rehab cues, we can refer on for specialist Breathing Therapy input.

“Our Physiotherapists are skilled educators and clinicians who can effectively treat chronic postural conditions and teach good postural awareness and skills for future self-management”

OUR SERVICES for the POSTURALLY CHALLENGED...

- A **post-graduate skilled assessment** of posture and muscle balance including differential diagnosis
- A full patient history taking into account **hobbies, recreational pursuits** and **work place dynamics**
- **Real Time Ultrasound Imaging** to teach correct activation of stabiliser muscles, those which enhance proper posture
- A **“Movement Competency Screen”** to reveal current movement faults and to enable quality exercise prescription, off-load strategies, habits, ergonomics
- **Manual therapy**—mobilisation and manipulation to address joint dysfunction
- **Soft-tissue therapy**—massage and trigger points to release muscle tension
- **Acupuncture** and trigger point dry needling for the same
- **Gym/exercise progressions** with liaison to trainers and other allied professional links
- **Clinical Pilates rehabilitation** programs

OUR POSTURE TOOLS....

- **Lumbar rolls**— with individualised selection and density. These include a strap for fixed placement on chair or car seat (to avoid loss!) Such is the effectiveness of these rolls, we often encourage multiple rolls so that use occurs at work, in the car and at home if necessary.
- **Posture dots**—self adhesive stickers to place strategically around home or work; acting as frequent reminders to self-check posture, breathing, etc
- **Postural taping**—provides an immediate feedback to patients as to where their bodies need to be in order to attain good posture. This can be a real eye-opener to some!
- **Foam rollers**—an excellent off-loading strategy. Ideal for end of the day unravelling!
- **Ergonomic advice** with handout information for self-check of work station set up
- **Standing workstations/desks**. Recent research has highlighted increased health risks associated with long hours spent in sitting positions. Suppliers of standup desks are now readily available.