

Good Posture. Good Function. Good Health.

by Joanne P. Fagerstrom, for the Shuttle

STAND UP STRAIGHT!” HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU heard those words in your life? Chances are the answer is a lot. Most of us accept that good posture is important, but often we’re more likely to notice someone else’s postural shortcomings than sense our own.

Why It Matters

Clinical research shows that well-aligned posture:

- Strengthens your bones
- Helps build a stronger core
- Helps decrease abnormal wear of joint surfaces
- Improves balance
- Improves digestion
- Helps you breathe more fully
- Contributes to confidence, positive mood and feeling of well-being
- Reduces stress levels

But even when we make an adjustment, such as pulling our shoulders further back, typically they drift right back to where they were as soon as we stop paying attention. What’s a well-intentioned person to do?

The answer is paradoxically simple and complex, and requires a whole-body approach. Here is a step-by-step guide to improving your posture:

Step 1 – The Test

Stand against a wall with your heels, buttocks and shoulder blades all touching the wall. If the back of your head touches the wall without straining or tipping your head back, read no further — your posture is great! For many people, this is not the case. To gauge how far your head is from the wall, place your fingers between the back of your head and the wall. The number of fingers you can fit in the space is your measurement. Make a mental note.

Step 2 – The “Posture Sequence” Exercise

Lie on the floor with your legs straight and your arms along your sides, palms up.

Head Press: Press the back of your head directly down into the floor. Hold for a count of five. Release. Repeat five times.

Shoulder Press: Press both shoulders and shoulder blades into the floor. Hold for a count of five. Release. Repeat five times.

Buttocks Squeeze: Tighten both buttock muscles. Hold for a count of five. Release. Repeat 5 times.

Knee Press: Press the backs of both knees into the floor as you simultaneously point your toes in the direction of the ceiling. Hold for a count of five. Release.



Repeat five times.

Each area in the sequence should be worked individually — this is not a cumulative exercise. Each is held for five counts and repeated five times. Remember to breathe. Build up the force you’re able to exert in each area gradually, never doing more than feels safe — and good!

Step 3 – The Secret Sauce

The key to improving and maintaining your new and improved posture is found above your neck. Body awareness, patience and consistency of practice, practice, practice are all critical parts of this process. Try to self-correct frequently throughout the day, but leave the judgment and critiquing aside. Change and improvement will come. Cultivate your ability to listen to the wisdom of your body, and remember that it is never, ever too late to learn something new and benefit from the process of trying.

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