

You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone



No! It's not 'Cue for a Song'. For those who have received their fair share of Birthday cards, the above phrase will cause a wry smile. Readers who completed the activity sheet for **North Norfolk's first Posture Forum**, made similar comments. At this point, a big 'Thank You' to those of you who responded to our request, printed in the January issue of the Holt Chronicle, and completed the *Activity Sheet* for 1-week. The response was remarkable, and the results fascinating. Mainly from the ladies, okay, there were a few, very manly, chaps, with ages ranging from teenagers to octogenarians. Activity levels varied between 8 to 90 hours per week. After deducting an average of 55 hrs (33%) for sleep, we were left with an average inactivity level of a staggering 74 Hrs (44%). Based on these figures it was no surprise as to why we see such a large array of postural



and inactivity related problems in the Practice. So! Here we go, this is the science bit. Concentrate now! See below, some basic exercise tips to help correct your posture, any time, any place and anywhere.

Tip 1: The ideal posture when standing would allow for a plumb line to hang straight through the ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle - if these joints were aligned the body would be much stronger and more efficient. When sitting, it would be just the ear, shoulder and hip to align.

Tip 2: Shoulder shrugging, a good exercise for a straight back. Slowly bring your shoulders up towards your ears, hold for six seconds then slowly lower. If your shoulders tend to hunch, pull your shoulder blades (not your shoulders) back. In addition, working your core muscles helps support your spine and will discourage any tendency to hunch over.

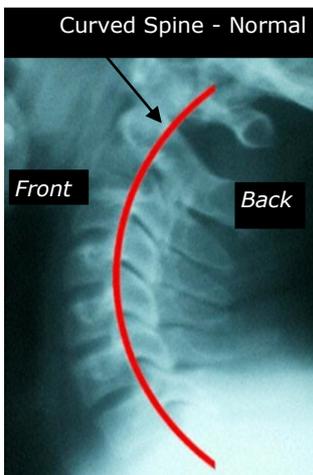
Tip 3: Draw your stomach in all the way, release by 50%, and hold that contraction whenever you can throughout the day. We call this, engaging the stomach, or, core muscles, and is particularly useful when lifting or bending, another tip, always bend from the hips.

Tip 4: When sitting, keep your lower back pressed against the back of the chair, that way you are more likely to sit in an upright position. Try not to cross your legs, this can cause problems with hips, knees and back, and, incidentally, veins in the legs.

Tip 5: Rising up from a chair seems simple enough but in the position described in **Tip 4**, it is impossible to stand up directly without first bending forward. Instead, try shuffling forward until you are 'perched' on the edge of the chair. Draw your feet back, under the seat. From this position you have only to tilt slightly forward before standing up, forcing the thigh muscles and not the much smaller back muscles to do the work.

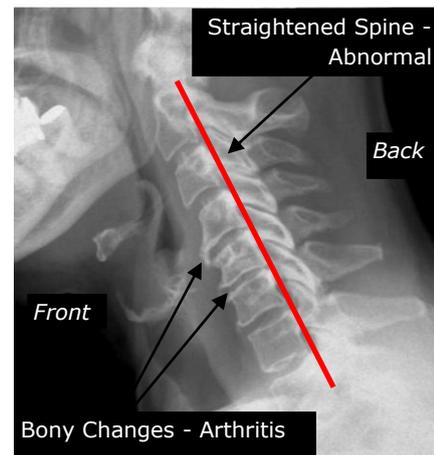
Tip 6: To help with your driving posture, place yourself in an ideal driving position with the seat angled 10-20° back from the vertical. Slightly angle the rear view mirror up a fraction. This will force you to maintain a good postural position, because slouching or hunching forward will result in poor vision through the rear window.

Case Study: With the above in mind, I thought you might find it interesting to read a recent situation of a patient who was treated for posture related problems and the encouraging outcome.



This 55-year old lady was suffering with severe, constant pain, in her right arm which came on quite suddenly after she turned her head to the right. She also had pins and needles in her right hand and was finding difficulty sleeping, sitting, walking and was constantly tired. The one position which gave her relief was to lie hunched over a chair. Painkillers, anti-inflammatories and heat application had little effect in easing her symptoms.

Her neck and shoulder blade were very tender and indications were of a possible trapped nerve. On taking an x-ray, I observed that she had a straightened neck, which should be curved (see x-ray images) plus some arthritis. We discussed her management plan which was to include chiropractic manipulation, traction and gentle soft tissue work to the neck muscles. Postural advice with exercise was given along with stretches for the neck and lower back. Within 3 treatments she had less pain and more neck movement, by her 5th treatment she was sleeping and by the 7th treatment her symptoms had gone. Today, the difference in her posture, confidence and



overall demeanor is amazing. Plus, she has gained a good 2 inches in height due to more strength in her lower back core muscles, thus allowing her to stand tall. Interestingly, she has also bought herself a new, much smaller and lighter handbag!

We can Help! At the Practice, we are constantly involved with postural and ergonomic workshops. We conduct presentations within the local community to educate and promote a better understanding of the importance of posture within the work-place, social environment, school, and, whilst engaging in sport. We have worked with members of staff from local GP surgeries and Dental Practices, North Norfolk District Council, Norfolk Constabulary, local Schools, the West Norfolk Hunt, Young Farmers throughout Norfolk, The Women's Institute, Splash at Sheringham and Fakenham Sports Club to name but a few. The service we offer is simple: - Either call, to book a free ½ hour individual pain and posture assessment at the Practice **OR** we can arrange a talk, at a place of your choosing. This is also a free service although we do request a small donation to our nominated charity, which is 'The Cromer Lifeboat'. In the meantime, take care of those spines!

Michael T'Anson Doctor of Chiropractic