



# *Posture*

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## Poor Posture

Slouching and poor posture can make you look heavier than you are and can also make you look insecure or unsure of yourself. Worse than that, though, it can also cause a number of health problems. The most obvious are back and neck pain, frequent headaches and pain in your joints and soft tissue. Less obvious problems include circulation problems, hormone trouble, problems with your nervous system and poor digestion.

Fortunately, it is possible to improve your posture. Here are some posture correction tips to get you started and with time and some effort you should see good results and find yourself feeling better and looking great.

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## Become Aware

The first and one of the most important steps to correct your posture is to start noticing it. For most of us poor posture has become such a habit that we don't even notice when we are doing it. If you can begin to become aware of when you are slouching and correct it when you catch yourself you will start to change that habit. Over time your poor posture habit will be replaced with good posture.

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## Build Your Muscles

Most people don't get enough exercise, and even those who do often focus only on good look. Weak muscles don't give your neck and spine the support they need and as a result your posture can suffer. Start working on building up your postural muscles to give your body the support it needs. Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates are all great choices for correcting bad posture.

## Lower Body Alignment

Many people tend to think that posture applies only to the trunk. But your lower body is equally important. Use the three components below to ensure that you are covering all of the aspects of good posture.

**Keep your feet parallel hip width apart.** It is important to keep your feet parallel when you stand and even more important when you walk or run, if your feet turn out when you run, there is a risk of knee injury.

**Unlock your knees.** Do not hyperextend your knees they should be slightly bent. Let your quadriceps do some work too.

## Pelvic Tilt

Imagine your pelvis is like a bowl. If the bowl is tipped forward it will spill. If it's level it can hold the contents. Keeping your pelvis level does two things: It builds strong core muscles (lower abdominals) and creates balance between the front and back of your body which means less chance for injury or lower back pain. Some curve in your lower back is healthy; too much can compress the discs in your spine and create pressure on you spinal cord.

## Upper Body Alignment

**Your Trunk.** Straighten your upper spine by placing one hand over your belly button and one hand just under your collarbone pull up with the top hand and down with the other. This will straighten your spine without throwing your shoulders back. Straightening your back also opens up your chest cavity, allowing you to breathe more fully and easily.

**Straighten Your Shoulders.** Slumped shoulders are another common posture problem. You don't have to throw your shoulders back military-style so that they are uncomfortable, but if you notice your shoulders slouching forward pull them slightly back toward each other.

**Keep Your Head Back Tripod.** One of the most common posture problems is jutting your head forward. This is especially true for people who work at a desk or a computer all day. Ideally your neck should line up over your shoulders to help support the weight of your head. Start paying attention to how you hold your head and when you notice it jutting pull it back into alignment with your shoulders. With the thumb and middle finger of one hand positioned just under your collar bone, let your chin rest on the tip of your pointed finger. This will put your head in the correct position –not too high not too low – and align your neck with your spine.