

## Posture Perfect

As you read this, take a quick body check. Are you hunching forward over your desk with your ribs sinking down to your hips and shoulders slumped? Or are you sitting (standing) straight with shoulders back and down and your spine long?

Once again, mom was right. Good posture can enhance your general well being. But the way we live today makes it difficult to follow that advice. Most of our daily activity is in front of us. We spend our days leaning over computers. When we do get up and out, it doesn't get much better. We're contorted under the weight of computer bags, briefcases and backpacks, or straining and twisting to carry on a cell phone conversation.

No wonder we're plagued with headaches, fatigue, neck pain and repetitive stress injuries. A little body awareness during the day can go a long way toward helping correct the toll modern life is taking.

- Sit or stand up straight and you'll notice you can breathe more easily. And oxygen can get to the brain.
- Roll your shoulders back and down away from your ears and relax your neck. You'll feel less tense.
- Elongate your body by pulling those ribs up out of your hips. Give the organs and lungs room to work more effectively.

Take an inventory of your daily habits and make changes that will benefit your bones, joints and muscles.

- ✓ Switch from a heavy shoulder bag to a wheeled case or backpack.
- ✓ Try a wireless headset if you find yourself walking along with head tilted and phone clutched between chin and neck.
- ✓ Invest in a better desk chair or at least a supportive back cushion.
- ✓ Adjust your keyboard height so forearms are at or slightly below right angles.
- ✓ Take a few breaks during the day. Get up and take a short walk; shake out your arms and legs; circle the wrists and ankles.
- ✓ Sign up for a stretch or yoga class.
- ✓ Lift weights (they can be light) several times a week. Get instruction so you are using proper form.

And, most important, take time to "lighten up." Look in the mirror and smile. Breathe deeply and slowly several times a day. Close your eyes for a minute or two. Take time to smell those roses...literally.

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