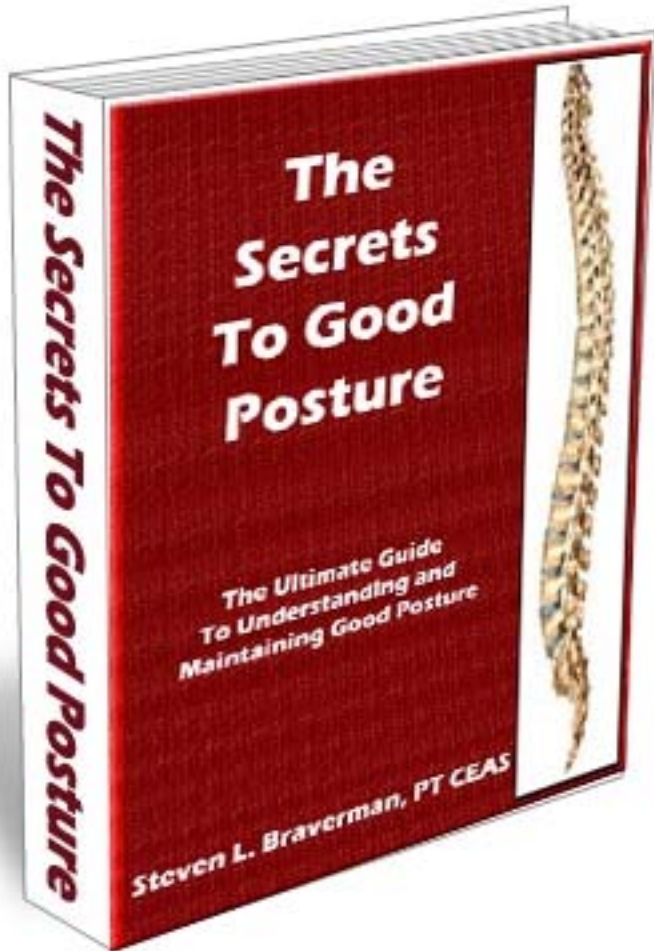


# THE SECRETS TO GOOD POSTURE



**BY**

**STEVEN L. BRAVERMAN, PT CEAS**

## **Disclaimer**

The information in this book is not a replacement for the services of a physician or physical therapist.

Please do not use this e-book to diagnose or treat a medical or health condition.

Please consult a physician in all matters relating to your health, and use discretion when using any of the strategies mentioned here.

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Dear Reader,

Thank you for downloading this e-book.

As healthcare professionals, our goal is to help you lead a healthy life; and correcting your posture is an important step towards it.

To put it simply, good posture is more than bodily aesthetics as it helps prevent pain in the lower back, neck and shoulder while performing day-to-day tasks.

This book is inspired by, and contains excerpts from “*The Secrets Of Good Posture - A Physical Therapist’s Perspective*” by the American Physical Therapy Association.

We are committed to provide services ranging from your exercise routine to rehabilitation needs. As your preferred practitioners, we consider it our responsibility to

help you start as quickly as possible. I have designed this book in accordance to our commitment to provide you with tips and information that you can apply as soon as you read.

Your feedback is valuable. Please contact us if you have any questions.

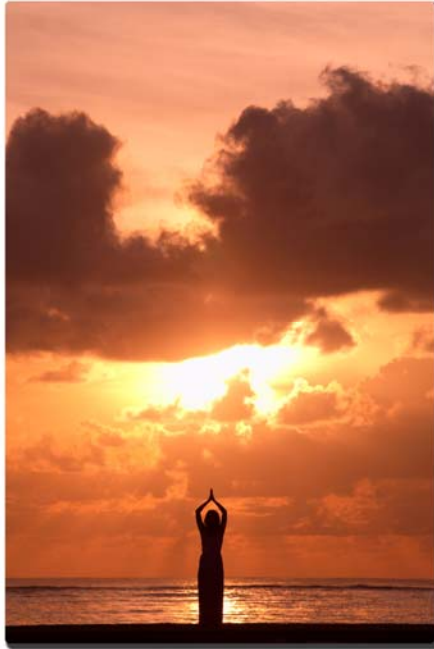
Thank you and enjoy the e-book.

Steven L. Braverman, PT CEAS

President, *RESTORE Physical Therapy & Ergonomic Consultants of New York*

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD POSTURE**

Good posture is important because it helps your body function optimally. It promotes movement efficiency and endurance and contributes to an overall feeling of well-being.



Good posture also helps minimize injury. If you have poor posture, your bones will not be properly aligned, and your muscles, joints, and

ligaments will have to bear more strain than nature intended. Faulty posture may cause fatigue, muscular strain and pain in later stages of life. Many individuals with chronic back pain can trace their problems to years of faulty postural habits. In addition, poor posture can affect the position and function of your vital organs, particularly those in the abdominal region.

Good posture is aesthetically pleasing – it contributes to a healthy appearance surging with vitality. An individual with good posture projects poise, confidence, and dignity.

### **The Anatomy of Good Posture**

To achieve and maintain good posture it is essential for your muscles and joints to be in optimal condition.

A healthy back has three natural curves: a slight forward curve in the neck (cervical curve),

a slight backward curve in the upper back (thoracic curve), and a slight forward curve in the low back (lumbar curve). Good posture works at keeping these three curves in balanced alignment.

Strong and flexible muscles are also essential to good posture. Abdominal, hip, and leg muscles that are weak and inflexible cannot support your back's natural curves.

The hip, knee and ankle joints balance your back's natural curves when you move, making it possible to maintain a good posture in any position.



## **GOOD POSTURE FOR LIFE**

Natural changes occur as your body grows older. These changes can influence your posture and make it more difficult to maintain good posture or correct poor posture.



Some of the physical changes that occur are:

- The discs between the spinal segments become less resilient and give in more readily to external forces, such as gravity and body weight.

- Muscles lose flexibility.
- Compression and deterioration of the spine, commonly seen in individuals with osteoporosis, cause an increased flexed, or bent forward, posture.
- Lifestyles usually become more sedentary. Sitting for long periods of time shortens various muscles, which results in the body being pulled into poor postural positions, and stretches and weakens other muscles, which tends to slump the body.

Despite the natural changes caused aging, good posture can be maintained and, for many, poor posture can be improved. In individuals with severe postural problems, such as poor alignments that have existed so long that structural changes have occurred, the poor posture can be kept from getting progressively worse.

All of us must consciously work at achieving and maintaining good posture as we

grow older.

It's important to be aware of the position of the head, whether sitting or standing. The typical forward head position accelerates aging. The spinal column is the container for the spinal cord. A slumped posture with a forward head changes the flow of signals from the brain down the spinal cord to the rest of the body. Head forward means chin forward, too. This spinal alignment is unhealthy.

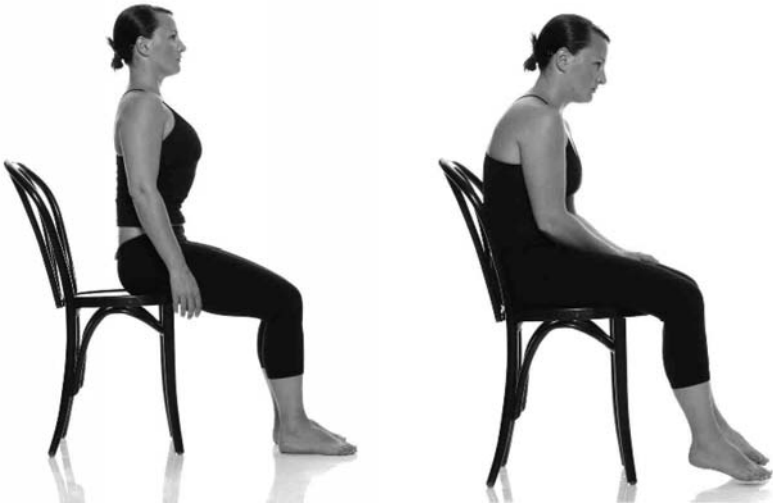


## **WE ARE A NATION OF FORWARD BENDING ADDICTS!**

During the last few decades, we have turned into a nation of flexion addicts. We are sitting at the computer, eating, traveling in cars and planes, watching T.V, talking on the phone, and eating. We think we are sitting, but physiologically we are slumping. We are almost always inclined forward even if we are doing nothing. This “posture” degrades our musculature and affects our neurological systems negatively.

The human body is designed to function from a neutral spine. When we are slumped in the sitting position, our muscles become lax. You can feel the difference when you sit upright on your sitting bones. Connect the lift of the domes of the pelvis, ribs, and head. Look at your clothes and see how they hang. Now slump and watch

how the fabric wrinkles. This is what is happening to your torso muscles. Still wonder why your abdomen is sticking out? Muscles become lax when you slump, so other muscles try to take over the slack of the internal support muscles. When you sit for long periods, your hips and shoulders become stiff. Your hip flexors and neck muscles must take up the slack. They are tightening to hold you up.

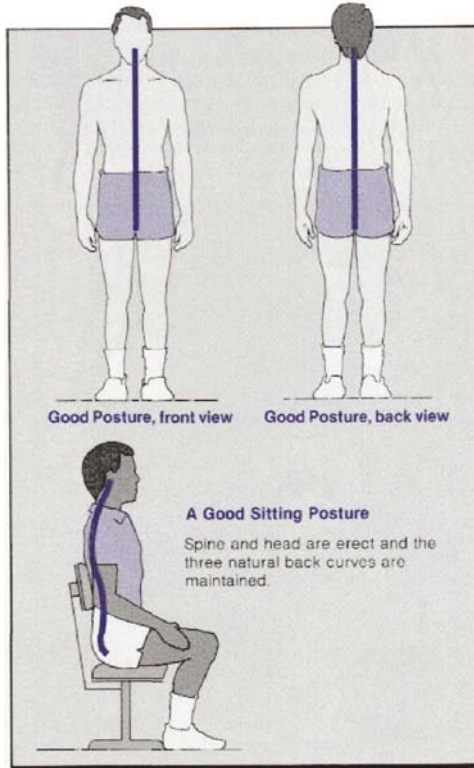


## **WHAT IS GOOD POSTURE?**

Good posture, when you are standing, is the straight vertical alignment of your body from the top of your head, through your body's center, to the bottom of your feet.

From a side view, good posture is seen as an imaginary vertical line through the ear, shoulder, hip, knee, and ankle. In addition, the three natural curves in your back can be seen.

From behind the back, the spine and head are straight, not curved to the right or left. The front view of a good posture shows equal heights of shoulders, hips, and knees. The head is held straight, not tilted or turned to one side.



## **HOW DO YOU CHECK YOUR POSTURE?**

- The best way to check your posture is to receive a comprehensive postural evaluation from an exercise professional or physical therapist. These healthcare professionals are skilled at evaluating and treating postural problems.
- To determine if a professional evaluation may be necessary, you can evaluate your own posture to some degree. For this, you need a wall and a full-length mirror.
- To check for normal curves of the spine:
- Stand with your back to a wall, heels about three inches from the wall. Place one hand behind your neck, with the back of the hand against the wall, and the other hand behind your low back with the palm against the wall.
- If there is excessive space between your back and the wall, such that you can easily move your hands forward and back more than one inch, some adjustment in your posture may be necessary to restore the normal curves of your spine.

## **HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR POSTURE**

The best way to improve or maintain your posture is to practice good postural techniques when sitting, standing, or moving.

Practicing good posture is not always as easy as it sounds, especially for some of us who have forgotten what good posture feels like. The following exercise can help bring back that good posture feeling.

Standing Position - Stand with your back against a wall, heels about three inches from the wall and feet about six inches apart: weight should be evenly distributed.

Place arms at your sides, palms forward. Keep ankles straight and kneecaps facing the front. Keep your lower back close to the wall. Straighten the upper back, lifting the chest and bringing shoulders back against the wall. Bring

head back to touch the wall while keeping the chin tucked in as if a string is attached to the middle of the back of your head pulling it back. Pull up and in with the muscles in the lower abdomen, trying to flatten the abdomen. Hold position for about 10 seconds, breathing normally.

Relax and repeat three to four times. Repeat entire exercise at least three times a day for optimum results.

## **BRIDGING TO IMPROVE POSTURE**

Bridging is an excellent exercise to improve posture.

- Imagine your feet have four corners: two on either side of the ball of the foot and two on the heel. With equal pressure on the four points, lift your hips up. Your knees should be parallel and in line with your feet. Do not allow your abdominal muscles to protrude out. Your sitting bones should move closer to your heels and your knees should be over your feet.



- Lower your entire spine in one movement. The highest point in the bridge should be your hip bones.



This is a tougher version:

- Lift your pelvis up.
- Raise your right leg.
- Return your right foot to the floor, but keep your hips level in a bridge.
- Lift your left leg into a Knee Fold.
- Return the left foot to the floor.
- Return the hips to the floor.

## **THE CAT AND CAMEL EXERCISE - FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POSTURE**

The Cat and camel exercise is a spinal movement for flexion and extension on all fours.

- 1) Lift up to all fours with your weight on your hands and knees. Feel your spine in its natural curves.
- 2) Connect your shoulder blades to hug around the sides of your ribs.
- 3) Imprint the abdominals into your spine to curve it upward like a scared cat. This is flexion of the spine.
- 4) Return to the neutral spine position.
- 5) Reverse this curve by lifting your head and tail up.



## **TIPS FOR MAINTAINING GOOD POSTURE THROUGHOUT LIFE**

Throughout the day, concentrate on keeping your three natural back curves in balanced alignment.

Keep your weight in control; excess weight exerts a constant forward pull on the back muscles, causing the muscles in the abdomen to stretch and weaken.

Avoid staying in one position for long periods; inactivity causes muscle tension and weakness.

Sleep on a firm mattress and use a pillow under your head just big enough to maintain the normal cervical—neck—curve. Avoid use of oversized or several pillows.

Exercise regularly; exercise promotes strong and flexible muscles that keep your spine

upright in a proper postural position.

Protect your back by using good body mechanics; bend your knees when picking something up or putting it down; carry a heavy object by using two hands and keeping the load close to your waist.



Wear comfortable and well-supported shoes. Avoid continuous use of high-heeled or platform shoes, which distort the normal shape of the foot and throw the back's natural curves out of alignment.

Walk with a good posture; keep the head erect with chin parallel to the ground, allow arms to swing naturally, and keep feet pointed in the direction you are going.

A regular exercise and stretching routine is important to keep the body flexible. It helps to enable movement through the reduction of the related pain, maintain and increase range of motion, reduce fatigue, and it lets you look and feel better. An effective exercise routine therefore:

- Keeps joints supple
- Strengthens muscles around the joints
- Strengthens and maintains bone and cartilage tissue
- Improves overall ability to do everyday activities
- Improves health and fitness by:
  - increasing energy level

- improving sleep
- assisting weight control
- improving overall cardiovascular condition
- decreasing depression
- improving self-esteem and emotional health

## **About The Author**

Steven L. Braverman, PT CEAS is a licensed physical therapist practicing in New York City. Mr. Braverman graduated from the physical therapy program at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1986.

Mr. Braverman is the founder and president of Steven L. Braverman, PT PC (RESTORE Physical Therapy) in New York City, specializing in the evaluation and treatment of orthopaedic, sports and spinal injuries. Mr. Braverman is also a Certified Ergonomic Assessment Specialist earning certification from the Back School of Atlanta.

Living in Long Island, Mr. Braverman is married and has two daughters, Emily and Allison.

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