

Protecting Your Spine with Good Posture

Most of us don't realize how much time we spend looking down at our phones and computers with our head and neck in a flexed forward position. The average human head weighs about twelve pounds, but as the neck bends forward and down, the weight on the cervical spine begins to increase. At a 15-degree angle, this weight is about 27 pounds, at 30 degrees it's 40 pounds, at 45 degrees it's 49 pounds, and at 60 degrees the weight on the cervical spine is around 60 pounds. If the alignment of the head and spine is not optimal, the neck can be predisposed to injury and/or the degenerative effects of wear and tear over time. Prolonged shearing of the vertebrae from forward head posture eventually irritates the small posterior joints in the neck which can result in neck pain that can travel down into the shoulder blades and upper back. As the cervical spine continues to degenerate the condition may worsen, developing degenerative disc disease and potentially herniating a disc.

One of the most common complaints of patients who work at a computer for many hours a day is neck and upper back pain. One of the first things that you can do to start combating the signs of neck pain is to start improving your posture. Work on keeping your back straight, your shoulders back and try to maintain a neutral spine when using technology. This not only applies to mobile devices, but e-readers, tablets, laptops and computers as well. It is also essential to have a proper ergonomic setup to decrease the risk of overuse injury in the muscles and joints. However, no matter how "ergonomic" your work station may be, you still need to be mindful of your body when you work or you'll never reap the benefits of your properly set up workspace.

Poor posture often worsens over time and won't improve on its own, so it is important to consult with a chiropractor to make sure the vertebrae in your spine are properly aligned. This will help correct the source of pain by removing pressure and irritation on nerves and restoring proper alignment to your spine. In addition to traditional chiropractic treatment using spinal adjusting, your chiropractor may recommend exercises you can practice at home to help strengthen your core muscles. Re-learning correct posture may take a little time, as the body learns to adapt to a better position. But gradually, keeping good posture in mind as much as possible, your back pain should continue to lessen with proper exercise and treatment.

It takes dedication and commitment to improve posture and bad habits but it is more than worth the effort. Not only will you feel and look better, you could be avoiding serious life-altering complications down the line. If you or someone you know has an overuse injury related to technology or your workplace, please call our office. We may be able to help.

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For more information, visit www.renzechiro.com or call the office at 965-3844.*