

STAYWELL

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Time on a computer has increased for employees working at home, kids doing home schooling, social distancing, and increased shopping on line. With that comes concern with cumulative trauma disorders from poor ergonomics.

Cumulative Trauma Disorder (CTD) can affect nearly all tissues—the nerves, tendons, tendon sheaths, and muscles, with the upper extremities being the most frequently affected. These painful and sometimes crippling injuries develop gradually over periods of weeks, months, and years as a result from repeated actions, such as twisting and bending the hands, arms, and wrists. With no immediate end in sight to Covid-19 social distancing guidelines, extended periods of time in a poor ergonomic position can lead to serious health problems. All too often, by the time someone pays attention to his/her posture, it is because a problem is already present and rather than preventing it they are reacting to it.

Spending long periods of time in a slumped or flexed position, like working on a laptop, can be one of the worst things for cumulative trauma risk.

Good posture is important to good health. Without good posture, a person's overall health may be compromised because the long-term effects of poor posture can affect body systems; i.e., digestion,

breathing, muscles, joints and ligaments,



circulation, bone structure, nerve function, and over-use injuries.

An individual who has poor posture may often be tired and unable to work efficiently or move properly. Poor posture can also lead to sleep problems and increased physical and emotional stress. Posture can be just as important to your health as eating right, exercising, getting a good night's sleep, and avoiding potentially harmful substances. Many aches, pains, and health problems can be eliminated or decreased by simply improving posture. Practicing good posture is a relatively simple way to increase your energy level and reduce stress and fatigue. The importance of good posture is often overlooked in an overall fitness program.



Good posture can play a major role in preventing back pain. Back pain is considered one of the most common medical complaints affecting eight out of ten people at some point during their lives. By not practicing good posture and not using adequate back support, muscles will experience added strain and more stress will be concentrated on the spine. Over time, the stress of poor posture can change the anatomical characteristics of the spine, leading to the possibility of constricted blood vessels and nerves, as well as problems related to muscles, discs, and joints. All of these problems can become major contributors to back and neck pain.

Poor posture can restrict proper breathing and can also close off the throat and windpipe which limits the amount of oxygen a person obtains. When breathing is restricted, the result will eventually lead to a reduction in energy. Oxygen is needed for energy and poor oxygen delivery can cause an individual to feel tired. Over time, this can have significant negative health outcomes and cause major health problems later in life.

Source: www.breathing.com: Posture and Breathing

Pulmonary hypertension is a form of high blood pressure that affects the arteries of the lungs and the right side of the heart. Some symptoms of pulmonary hypertension might include:

- Shortness of breath initially while exercising, then over time shortness of breath while at rest.
- Fatigue.
- Dizziness or fainting spells.
- Chest pressure or pain.
- Swelling in ankles, legs, and eventually swelling in the abdomen.
- Bluish color to lips.
- Racing pulse or heart palpitations.

Long-term airflow restriction or upper airway obstruction, caused by poor posture, can lead to pulmonary hypertension.

Source: MayoClinic.com: Pulmonary Hypertension and The Worldwide Intensivist - Pulmonary Circulation

What Can You Do?

Whether it is your spouse, children, grandchildren or yourself, the time spent on a computer or in a slouched position can lead to problems. Pay attention and do something now rather than wait until a problem develops. Here are a few ideas to try if you feel discomfort, are using bad posture, or you have stayed in a position too long:

- Set up your computer to be ergonomically correct as possible.
 -  Knees - 90 degree angle with shins straight up and down.

-  Thighs - parallel with ground.
-  Hips - 90 degree angle, body upright.
-  Elbows - at side, 90 degree bend and relaxed.
-  Wrists - only slight 10 degree bend or so, relaxed.
-  Head – upright, not looking down.
-  Bifocals - adjust monitor so head is upright when looking through bifocal.

- If on a laptop, use a wireless keyboard and mouse to work on the computer. Set the laptop at proper height for your monitor to improve posture and ergonomics.
- If typing on a laptop, use a laptop table or pillow on your lap to elevate wrist, elbows, arms and head.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Reverse the curve regularly. If leaning forward, bend backwards over the arm of the couch, chair or an exercise ball.
- Stretch chest, shoulders, wrist, and neck regularly.
- If you need assistance with this issue for your family please contact Brian.

