

## DAMINI PHYSIOTHERAPY PATIENT INFORMATION ARTICLE # 3

### **Posture: Where have all the good ones gone?**

#### **The Trend**

The seniors of our society had good posture drilled into them from an early age. My mother recounts stories of having to eat sitting with her elbows looped around a broomstick that was placed across her back so that she would remember to not slouch.

The next generation heard of these stories, but never incurred such severe reminders of posture and are currently experiencing some of the repercussions of poor posture. Their children which are regularly sitting in school, at computers and in front of video gaming systems for hours are receiving very little/if any instruction on proper posture. So the trend continues of worsening posture with every new generation.

#### **The problem with bad posture**

As Physiotherapists we are constantly working at improving peoples' postures, whether it is the teenager who likes to slouch, the office worker who sits all day or the baseball pitcher who is developing a rotator cuff injury because of his poor sitting in university classes.

The problem with bad posture is that like any bad habit, the younger we start and the longer we maintain it before doing something about it, the harder it is to correct. We are training our bodies to adopt this new position as normal. Muscle length and strength changes occur which set our bodies up with muscle imbalances that we don't often experience pain until long after these changes start. Then as we age our spine starts to stiffen, this is only natural, but if poor posture has been the trend then you will be stuck staring at your toes when your spine stiffens in a rounded position.

#### **What we see in the clinic**

There are very obvious postural problems that need to be treated such as scoliosis (where the back curves side to side) and kyphosis (where there is excessive rounding of the spine), but there are far reaching implications of poor posture that aren't so obvious. Poor posture can result in muscle imbalances that create higher amounts of stress at certain areas of the spine. These muscle imbalances can irritate nerves, damage soft tissue such as tendons and result in degeneration at the joints, which can make individuals more vulnerable to tendonitis, nerve compression and bottom line PAIN. Yes that elbow or calf pain could be result of your posture even if you don't have pain in your neck or back.

#### **There is hope**

Posture can often be improved by addressing where the problem originates from ie: improper workstation setup, sitting on a wallet all day at work, or overuse of certain muscles that is leading to a muscle imbalance. Starting a customized stretching and core-strengthening program, that can be very simple or extensive depending on the individual's wishes and needs to rid the body of these imbalances.

**Be preventative:** Throughout life we should stop and smell the roses, but in our later life we hope that we are not stuck bent over forced to look at them. The sooner we start the process of correcting our posture the easier it will be to fix and then maintain that posture.

For feedback, questions and input in relation to the articles please contact Damini Physiotherapy.