



Chiropractic Miracles

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Dr. Bennett's Breakthrough Patient Newsletter...

Bennett Chiropractic and Wellness Center
7130 Estero Blvd. Suite 1 Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931
239-463-1640 - fax: 239-463-1955
www.beachchiropractor.com

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Dear Patient and Friend,

Most of us remember at some point during our childhood, when a well-meaning parent, teacher or other adult demanded that we "stand up straight!" While we may have regarded such advice as annoying, obtuse or uncool, it was some of the most profound guidance we ever received, and those who did not heed that warning may be paying a costly price because of it.

The spine, the primary structural component of posture, is more than a stack of bones with muscles and ligaments strung across it – it is the protective enclosure that houses your spinal cord, the extension of your brain that connects to all your body parts.

Spinal function is intimately involved in all aspects of your health. The delicate nerves, which act like wires between your brain (the power source) and your cells (the appliances or lights that receive and use the power) are dependent on good spinal alignment and movement, so that the brain, organs and muscles operate properly.

So, when you stand up straight, you do more than look good – you are literally helping your brain and body to work together which will ultimately lead to better expression of health.

So, stand up straight!

Posture and Your Brain

Psychologist and neurobiologist Dr. Roger Sperry won the Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1981 for his research on the function of the brain.

As you know, your brain is responsible for reacting to your environment, running your internal metabolism, as well as thinking and decision-making. You need your brain for everything you do – and if your brain isn't as healthy as it could be, it compromises the way your body works.

Dr. Sperry, renowned brain scientist, stated, "90% of the stimulation and nutrition to the brain is generated by the movement of the spine."

This means that having a healthy spine is essential if you want a healthy brain, and this is the leading reason why you and your family need to take the best care possible of your spine – not only does it reduce the likelihood of painful problems, it enhances your brain function which makes you healthier in every way.

The first thing you can do to take care of your spine is to develop the habit of good posture. According to the American Posture Institute (API), "Modern sedentary living, misalignments and faulty movements in the spine combined with poor posture diminish nutrition and stimulation to the brain. How well we eat, move, think, connect and cope with stress determines our destiny."

What is posture anyway? Posture is the position you hold yourself in, standing, sitting or lying down. It's the way you deal with gravity, which exerts a constant downward pull on your body. Your posture is the sum total of the alignment and movement of all the bones and muscles in your body, especially your spine.

The API website says, "Good posture involves training your body to stand, walk, sit and lie in positions where the least strain is placed on supporting muscles and ligaments during movement or weight-bearing activities." This means that proper alignment and movement reduces the stress on your spine, and that translates directly into a healthier brain.

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Posture and Your Brain

It's important for anyone to maintain a healthy posture, but it's especially important for young people – because young people with poor posture habits turn into sicker adults.

To find your best posture, start by standing whatever you think is straight. Now, look down, and be sure your feet are straight, and about hip or shoulder width apart. Divide your weight evenly over your legs with your knees relaxed and let your arms dangle naturally by your sides. Position your shoulders above your hips, and your head above your shoulders. From the side, your ears, shoulders and hips should be aligned.

How about when you're sitting? You want to aim for keeping both feet flat on the floor with your knees level with your hips. So, pick a chair that is at that height or can be adjusted to it. Sit back in the chair, and if you need extra support in the lower back, use a cushion or rolled up towel. Keeping your neck and upper back straight but relaxed, tuck your chin and stretch your neck a bit, so your head reaches toward the ceiling. If you need to, use a stool or footrest under your feet.

Sleeping posture is also critically important, since you spend between a quarter and a third of your life in bed. There are many valid sleeping positions, and your comfort will be a great determining factor. But most usually, sleeping on your back is ideal, with your neck supported but not pushed forward, and your knees slightly broken with a pillow or cushion. It's just as good to sleep on your side, with a pillow between your knees if desired and enough height on your head pillow to keep your neck straight. Sleeping face down with your head turned all the way to one side all night is least beneficial for your spinal health. Keeping your spine straight while you sleep promotes relaxation, so you awaken more refreshed and rested.

Maintaining a healthy posture, whether you're standing, sitting or lying down, is essential for good brain function. Work with your family members to remind each other to stand up straight, and it will reward you – you'll feel better, look better, be healthier and you'll keep your brain working at peak efficiency.

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Ergonomics: Good Posture at Work

Everyone who works in an office setting, at work or at home, is subject to the challenges and opportunities of designing the optimal workspace. Developing some simple habits and adjustments to your work area can lead to less stress, more productivity and less risk of injury or pain.

According to Drs. Krista Burns and Mark Wade, co-founders of the American Posture Institute, taking short “posture breaks” will avoid aches and pains and decrease stress. These little interludes stretch muscles that become tightened from staying too long in the same position.

They recommend a thirty-second break twice or three times an hour. One way to take such a break is to shift yourself to the front of your chair. Spread your arms and thrust your chest forward. Relax your head backward to a point of comfort, and just settle into that for a half a minute. You’ll be amazed how rejuvenated you feel, especially at the end of a long day.

Arrange your workspace so everything is within easy reach. You want to minimize excess movement and increase efficiency. Sit so you can keep your elbows close to your body and your wrists straight. Relax your shoulders. Keep your hips, knees and ankles at 90° with your feet flat on the floor or on a stool or footrest. Your head should remain upright with your eyes straight ahead – adjust the screen to your eyes, rather than moving your head to the screen. Your back should be straight against the back rest, with a cushion or roll supporting your lower back if desired.

A safe and well-designed workstation can reduce stress and increase productivity. Good ergonomics avoids unnecessary injury, promotes comfort and makes you less irritable. And, healthy ergonomic posture, like all good posture, is good for your brain.

If you want to be sure of your postural health, consult your family chiropractor, your neighborhood spinal specialist. He or she can help you learn how to take better care of your brain, spine and nerve system, so you and your family can be as healthy as possible.

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