



Client handout:

Assessing and Correcting Your Posture

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Assessing and correcting your posture minimises potential for pain and injury during everyday activities, exercising and playing sports.

Quick posture self-assessment from The BioMechanics Method

To assess your own posture, stand against a wall in bare feet with your feet pointing straight ahead and your heels, buttocks, shoulders and head touching the wall.

Lower-body problems

Pay attention to where the weight is in your feet. If you are standing with good posture, your bodyweight should be positioned over the outside of your heels. However, if you feel pressure in the front of your feet and toes, this means you are falling forwards and have to push down with your toes to keep balanced. This may cause your knees to bend and/or your calf muscles to tighten, causing problems in your feet, ankles and knees.

Lower-back problems

Now shift your attention to your lower back by sliding your hand in the space between your lower back and the wall. If you can slide more than just your fingers into the space (like your whole hand or even up to your forearm) then your lower back arches too much. If this is the case, your pelvis will also be out of alignment because when the lower back arches the pelvis tips down the front. These problems can be the result of tight hip flexor muscles and weak glutes and can lead to pain in the lower back and hips.

Upper-back problems

Lastly, shift your awareness to your upper back by noting what happens to your shoulders as you decrease the arch in your lower back by tucking your tailbone under and tilting your pelvis. If your shoulders come away from the wall, it means that the muscles of your shoulders and upper back are weak (which is why it is difficult to keep your shoulders back to the wall when you remove the excessive arch in your lower back). This weakness in the upper back and shoulders can lead to shoulder, back and neck pain.

Exercises

Here are three corrective exercises you can use to help improve these posture problems:



LOWER-BODY PROBLEMS

Performing a standing calf stretch can help realign the lower body and help shift your bodyweight back into your heels when standing.

■ Calf stretch

Stand in a split lunge stance (make sure foot is aligned straight from front to back) and push the heel of the back foot into the ground. Hold for 30 seconds each side.

LOWER-BACK PROBLEMS

Stretching the hip flexor muscles enables the hips to move forwards under the spine so the lower back does not have to overcompensate by arching excessively to hold the torso upright.



■ Hip flexor stretch

Kneel with one leg in front of the other. Tuck your pelvis under until you feel the glutes of the back leg contract. Keep the torso erect without arching the lower back excessively. Hold for 30 seconds each side.

Incorporating these corrective exercises into your daily routine and/or workout programme will improve your posture and help you feel and function great for years to come.

UPPER-BACK PROBLEMS

Strengthening the muscles of the upper back helps with lifting the torso upright to relieve stress to the neck and shoulder area.

■ Straight arm raise

Lie on the ground with your knees bent. Raise your arms overhead until they reach the ground. Pull your arms down towards the floor without arching your lower back, shrugging your shoulders or bending your arms. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat three times.

