The Importance of Posture

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Osteoarthritis and Posture

Your posture has a tremendous impact on the health of your joints. Sitting in the wrong positions regularly will place abnormal chronic stresses on your body. As a result, your muscles will have to compensate to take pressure off the joints, and in time your joints will suffer. Let’s see how bad posture can lead to or aggravate osteoarthritis and what can you do to avoid these problems.

Posture and Joints

Why is neck pain so common? Think about your body. Your neck supports the head, which is roughly 10 pounds. If you have a good posture the head will rest right above the neck. Most of us, however, will carry the head a bit forward in relation to the neck. The muscles will try to help adjust the body by working harder and will become fatigued. The force from the head and neck will influence the small joints of the neck, which will, in time, lead to wear and tear of those joints and can trigger early development of osteoarthritis. If you already have this condition, improper posture will speed up the degenerative process and cause more pain.

Do you spend a lot of time in front of the computer? This can cause the loss of the two natural curves of the spine (found in the upper back and lower back) and add strain to your muscles. Beside degenerative changes to your spine and muscles, some blood vessels and nerves may also be constricted. As a result, you may experience back and neck pain, osteoarthritis headaches, fatigue and even problems with breathing and function of major organs.

Improving Your Posture

- **Stay active.** Regular exercise keeps the joints mobile and healthy and can help prevent and manage osteoarthritis. Choose low impact exercises such as swimming and yoga, because they improve your posture, strengthen the muscles, put less strain or your joints while bring your heart rate up. Strength exercises are also beneficial for joint, bone and muscle health. Learn the proper technique from a certified instructor to avoid injuries and unhealthy postures.

- **Keep an eye on your weight.** If your posture is not good, and you also have some extra pounds, there will be additional strain on your joints, especially hips and knees. While you work on improving your posture, try to shed those extra pounds as well so you can better improve your bone alignment.
- **Avoid repetitive movements.** Athletes, professional dancers and construction workers are more likely to suffer from osteoarthritis because their work involves repetitive movements that promote early degeneration of the joints. If this is your case, you need to learn and practice proper form, change the routine on a regular basis and use various movements as much as you can.
- **Talk to a healthcare professional.** Physiotherapists, chiropractors or occupational therapists can teach you’re certain exercises to keep a good posture while working, exercising or performing day to day activities.