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Straight Facts On Good Posture

NEW YORK, Jan. 24, 2004



(Photo: CBS/AP)

(CBS) Turns out Mother knew what she was when she told you to stand up straight!

The Saturday Early Show's Dr. Mallika Marshall says if you have good posture, it means that your bones are properly aligned. And proper alignment is necessary if you want your muscles, joints and ligaments to work properly. If you have good posture, your internal organs are in the right position and can work

more effectively.

Bad posture can lead to serious health issues, including chronic back pain. Marshall says if you think you have bad posture, get in touch with your doctor.

Poor Posture

There are many signs you may have bad posture. Some of the most common are when you have rounded shoulders and a rounded upper back. If your head juts forward, that's another sign. People with poor posture can also have an arched lower back and protruding backside. Simple back pain can also be a warning sign.

Proper Posture

A person with proper posture will have three natural curves in the back. Marshall says look for the line between your shoulders to be level, not tilted. Your head should be held straight; again no tilting or turning to one side. Another sign of good posture is when the little bumps on your spine are in a straight line down the center of your back.

Scoliosis

Scoliosis is most common in adolescent females. It's usually detected by either a doctor, coach or gym teacher, who will see that the spine is curved. You can spot it by looking in the mirror - if you see that the spine is curved, it could be scoliosis. Also, when people with scoliosis bend over, the curve looks worse.

Heavy Backpacks

Poor posture in children who carry heavy backpacks is commonly known as backpack syndrome. You know a backpack is too heavy if the child leans forward or has rounded shoulders while wearing one. But, Marshall says there are ways to avoid backpack syndrome. A bag should be no heavier than 10 percent of your child's body weight. For children under 10, the bag should be closer to five percent of their body weight. Also, encourage your child to wear both straps of the backpack.

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Tips To Help Maintain Good Posture

- **Check Your Child:** Poor posture, as can be seen with backpack syndrome, can begin in childhood. At your child's next appointment with the pediatrician, ask the doctor to do the scoliosis test. Marshall says steps can be taken to correct alignment problems.
 - **Keep Weight Down:** Extra weight, especially a spare tire, puts excess pressure on your back and weakens the stomach muscles.
 - **Exercise Regularly:** If you exercise, you are more flexible and your muscles are stronger, which helps support proper posture.
 - **Buy Proper Bedding:** Marshall says to make sure your mattress is firm, but not too firm. This helps support your spine even while you sleep.
 - **Examine Work Space:** Many people spend their day at a computer. Marshall says if you are one of them, you need to make sure that your chair is high enough so that your hands are over the keyboard. Also, if you have short legs, you may want to consider buying a footrest, which will help take pressure off the legs.

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