

# Gravity and muscle weakness cause **posture degeneration**

*Three steps to  
standing taller*

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**An exercise ball to replace your chair is a fun choice, especially if you want to strengthen your balance as well.**



More and more we're slumped over computers or hunched over cellphones and tablets, and it's wreaking havoc on our posture. Mom told us to "stand up straight," but the stress of bodies being squeezed behind a desk and fixed in front of a keyboard is why doctors and posture specialists are treating new problems like text-neck,

the ability to breathe deeply is lost, leading to a reduced desire to exercise and be active. This is often the beginning of an unhealthy, lifelong cycle.

Improving posture is easy; follow these three steps for a do-it-yourself postural analysis:



computer-back, and carpal-tunnel syndrome.

Awareness of a problem is always the first step toward improvement. Especially if your lifestyle isn't going to change, start a monthly habit of looking at, and documenting, what the world sees when you believe you're standing tall.

Checking out the current state of your posture is not just about alleviating pain or looking better and younger. Years of bad habits and repetitive motion cause changes in how our body functions. Gravity and muscle weakness cause posture degeneration and real health consequences. Movement is often restricted, flexibility decreases, and

#### ***Step 1: Take a posture picture***

Use a free posture app like PostureZone, or any cellphone camera to set a baseline for the current state of your posture. You'll need a friend to snap the picture - selfies don't work. Have your friend take three pictures of you: one each from the front, back and side. Be sure to stand straight with what feels like your best posture.

#### ***Step 2: Print your postural pictures***

Print out each picture to a separate sheet. Put a dot between your feet on the front and back view, and on your ankle on the side view. Then fold each paper in half



vertically, neatly at the dot.

### ***Step 3: Check your postural symmetry***

Front and back view pictures: The two halves of your body should appear balanced. If your head or torso is off to one side, or one arm hangs further from the body, or one hand hangs lower than the other, your posture is not symmetrical.

Side view picture: The line starting at your ankle should pass through your hip, shoulder, and ear. If your head is far forward of that line, you may have a posture distortion called Forward Head Posture (FHP).

If you're like most people, you'll be amazed to learn your perception of 'best posture' translates to something not quite so straight and balanced when captured in an image. You'll also note some opportunities for improvement.

File your self-check posture analysis away to compare to new posture pictures in coming months. Overtime, you'll use previous assessments to notice changes... for better or worse.

### ***Choose smart posture habits***

Many people find taking the first step to become aware helps them stand and sit taller throughout the day. You can make it easier to adapt to new habits by choosing a good chair when sitting. An exercise ball to replace your chair is a fun choice, especially if you want to strengthen

your balance as well. Remember to unfold your body by standing up tall and stretching during regular posture breaks two or three times an hour.

It's smart to add posture awareness to any exercise you do. Exercising with poor posture will train you to stand and move poorly. If your posture picture revealed any imbalance, or you've had back pain or neck issues in the past, add focused posture exercise to your daily routine. Yoga, StrongPosture®, and Pilates are exercises that will work deep core muscles that are great for building body awareness and control.

At the end of the day, posture is very personal. If you prefer to work with a professional, a Certified Posture Exercise Professionals (CPEP) as well as many chiropractors, physical therapists, trainers, and others specialize in posture. They will assess the mechanics of your body and recommend a posture analysis as the first step to correlate posture biomechanics with any symptoms or pain.

Your posture is more than how the world sees you; it affects every function of the body. Amazingly, it just takes a bit of effort to strengthen your posture and create an anti-aging habit to make you look and feel better, avoid injury and exercise effectively to stay active and age well.

Posture Expert, Dr. Steven Weiniger, is the author of *Stand Taller Live Longer- An Anti-Aging Strategy*; self-help guide to improve posture serves as senior editor of [BodyZone.com](http://BodyZone.com), an online wellness resource that offers an international directory of posture specialists (Certified Posture Exercise Professionals). He can be contacted via [PosturePractice.com](http://PosturePractice.com). For more on do-it-yourself posture analysis and tips on how to improve posture see [www.StrongPosture.com](http://www.StrongPosture.com).



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