

How to get the perfect posture

Hunched shoulders and poor posture can lead to a range of health issues down the track. Skeletal therapist **Dell-Maree Day** shares the invisible exercise technique that can help set you straight.

If you're currently hunched over your desk like a droopy pot plant, you're really not doing yourself any favours. Not only does bad posture look unsightly, it can also lead to some nasty ailments as you age. Skeletal therapist Dell-Maree Day says it's vital women strengthen their bodies in their 40s, given that bone density starts to gradually decrease during this decade.

"The effects of pre-menopause, menopause itself, calcium and vitamin D deficiencies or just the natural ageing process can lead to a loss of bone strength putting you at risk of developing osteoarthritis," Day explains. "So, it's important to make sure your muscles are working optimally to support your bones and that they are positioned correctly."

Posture training can also improve your entire system, she says. "Hunching and slouching will restrict how well your body oxygenates and functions as a whole. This can lead to aches and pains and can leave you more susceptible to injury."

"Additionally, compressing your organs can lead to respiratory ailments, as well as making you feel stressed and tired which can compromise your immune system. Any of these situations are not ideal as you get older and can become debilitating or even dangerous."

However, while many people want to improve their posture, often they don't know how to. Day was seeing so many people in her practice with bad posture habits, she created a system called The Invisible Exercise (TIE), showing you how to correctly use the 600 or so muscles in your body by mastering 10 key postures that will realign your body.

"When we position our bones correctly, our muscles are lifted onto the bones the way they're supposed to. This triggers muscle memory, ensuring every muscle is the perfect length and reminds the muscle of its individual purpose. The muscles will resume working for you as they are designed to do. This improves your posture and body shape."

Day says the most effective posture training requires being as still as possible. "It may look like you're not doing much, and any exercise is 'invisible', but in fact your body's burning calories as it stretches and retrains itself." **P**

Fast fact

The main job of the neck is to hold up your head, which weighs around 5 kilograms. So it's worth taking time out of your desk-bound day to give it a stretch every now and then.



DELL-MAREE DAY SAYS THIS TECHNIQUE CAN CHANGE HOW YOU LOOK AND FEEL

START BY MASTERING HOW YOU BREATHE

Stop work every hour and repeat this deep breathing exercise six times to strengthen the muscles around your diaphragm: Breathe in through your nose and as you breathe out through your lips think, 'My body is tall and relaxed'. Repeat the breathing exercise while in the sitting posture (see below). You can also try doing it while in the other postures as described. In time, as you do the breathing exercise and think this thought, your body will assume the position automatically.

1 SITTING POSTURE

Sit on the front half of a chair. Place your feet flat on the floor with a hand's width space between your feet and knees. Sit up tall and relaxed. Holding this pose helps tone abs and burn kilojoules. As your spine stacks itself up into a natural position there will be a reduction in the compression and distortion of joints, which is the key to eliminating aches and pains when seated.

2 STANDING POSTURE

Stand up tall and look straight ahead. Have your feet slightly apart for extra stability. Your body should feel relaxed – don't try to "stand up straight" as people tend to over correct, sticking out their chest and ending up sore. Standing tall will relax your upper back and shoulders.

3 LYING POSTURE

Lying on your back, bend your knees so the soles of your feet are on the ground and not too close or too far from your bottom. With your arms at each side move your hands roughly 30cm from your sides. Sink the top parts of both your upper arm bones into the floor, which naturally rolls your collarbone wide and repositions your thoracic spine. This relaxes the large upper back and neck muscles. As the pressure will be taken off major joints, you'll feel more relaxed.

4 FACIAL POSTURE

Always aim to look straight ahead. Make sure your jaw is not too close to your throat or too far away. When in resting mode, your facial and neck muscles should be relaxed and not clenched. Looking straight ahead prevents jowls from falling forward and strengthens your neck muscles. The stronger your neck muscles, the less upper back pain you'll experience.

Learn more about *The Invisible Exercise* program at theinvisibleexercise.com.au