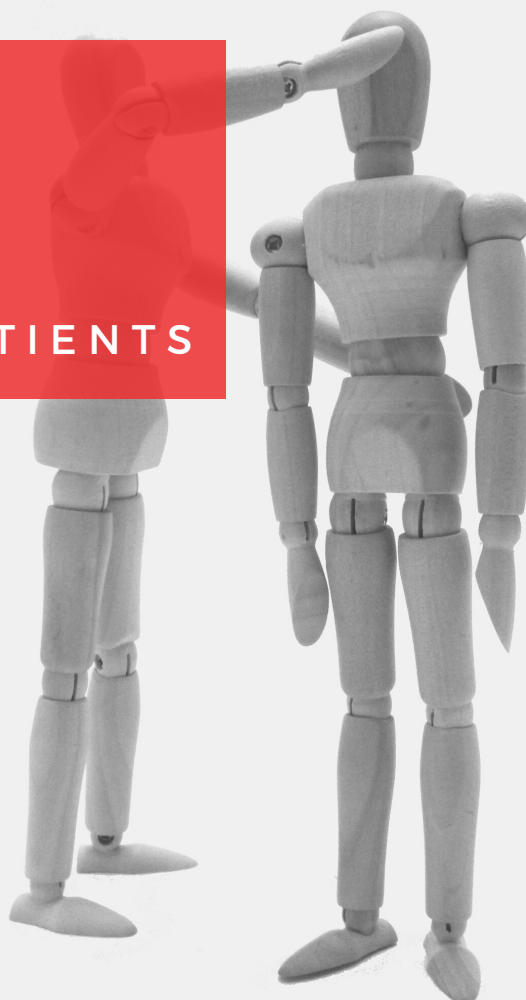


POSTURE

ADVICE FOR PATIENTS



Posture refers to the position in which we hold ourselves when sitting or standing.

The way we live our lives today means a lot of us struggle with aches and pains that could be related to our posture.

All too often we're engrossed in everyday activities. We hunch over desks, phones and steering wheels, carry bags, children or other heavy items while tilting to the side and slump on the sofa in the evenings.

But did you know that there's not really such a thing as 'bad posture'? Instead, the secret to preventing problems is frequently moving and changing position.

Remaining active is key to avoiding the obvious lower, middle or upper back pain you'd generally associate with postural problems. But there's a whole host of additional symptoms too, which include neck tension, headaches, TMJ and compressed lungs or organs resulting in lower lung capacity or poor digestion or circulation; not to mention reduced energy.

The good news is, it's never too late to do something to improve your posture.

And you can normally start to feel the benefits of slight tweaks to your routine and an increased awareness of moving at regular intervals. So, remembering to straighten that spine and keep your head held high, read on to learn more...

DIAGNOSIS & OUTLOOK

Problems with posture are one of the most common complaints we see at W5Physio. We see many patients who come to us with unexplained pain which, following examination, we find to be related to their posture.

The good news is that posture, in most cases, is very treatable. A physiotherapist can definitely help with posture problems, but there are also a number of things you can do to improve your posture yourself (refer to the exercises and prevention tips overleaf), plus simply increasing your awareness of the way your move (or don't move) can help.

If you or your physiotherapist suspect your pain is related to posture, there are a number of things that s/he will assess when you visit us.

Your physio will check the natural curves of your back, head alignment and shoulder and pelvic symmetry. They may also look at other joints in your body to identify any issues.

Should you require postural realignment, there are a number of ways in which your physiotherapist can help. These include:

- Hands-on manipulation
- Soft tissue massage
- Joint mobilisation
- Acupuncture
- Ergonomic advice
- Prescribing tailored, corrective exercises and/or Pilates



EXERCISES



Your physio will be able to advise on the best exercises for your specific postural problems, but here are some generic moves that can help to improve posture. Take your time, stretch gently and stop immediately if you feel any pain.

1.

WALL ANGELS

Stand up straight with your back and hips against a wall. Lift your arms up from your side and try to take them all the way up as high as you can (like a wing), then slowly back down again.

2.

HIP FLEXOR STRETCH

Stand with one foot a yard or so in front of the other. Bend forward sinking into your front knee to open up your hip on that same leg, feeling a nice stretch down the front of the thigh. Hold for 15 seconds or so, each leg a couple of times though. Hang onto a wall or chair for balance too!

3.

LUMBAR ROTATIONS

Lie on your back, bend your knees up keeping your feet on the bed/floor, and gently rock your legs side to side 10 times to feel a nice easy stretch in your lower back and pelvis.

PREVENTION TIPS



As explained earlier the prognosis for postural issues is very positive, but often some tweaks to your lifestyle are required.

- 1) Try to have greater awareness of how you're sitting, standing, lifting and moving. Check in on yourself regularly, even setting an alarm at regular intervals if you need an extra reminder.
- 2) Be active. Any exercise is good where posture is concerned (so long as you're remembering to think about your posture whilst working out). Forms of exercise that work particularly well for posture include yoga, Pilates and tai chi.
- 3) Strengthen your core. If your stomach muscles are strong, they'll help to keep your spine aligned.
- 4) Think about ergonomics. This doesn't only apply to individuals in desk jobs, but to all of us in everyday scenarios. Think about kitchen surfaces, car seat positioning, activities involving reaching/lifting, etc. All our physios can offer advice on postural best practice.

Postural awareness is definitely worth a little extra effort. As well as alleviating aches and pains, you'll improve digestion and lung capacity. You'll gain a stronger core, better form when exercising and you'll even appear taller and more confident.

FOR MORE ADVICE OR TO BOOK A CONSULTATION, CONTACT W5PHYSIO: