

Remember when you were growing up and your mother told you, “Stop slouching and stand up straight.” Well, as it turns out, mother does know best!

It may surprise you to know that, negative appearances aside, your posture can have a significant effect on your health. It is important to realize that proper posture starts with proper head and neck position. If you have good posture your **ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle** should be in vertical alignment. In other words, if you drop a plumb line from your ear, it should pass through all those points. If your head is forward of your shoulder, you have *forward head posture* (FHP). And, for every inch that your head is off-center, an average of 10 -20 additional pounds of force are exerted on the muscles in your neck and upper back, making them work harder just to hold your head up! Furthermore, it is estimated that 90% of the population exhibits FHP and its complications.

The literature shows that FHP has been linked to a variety of adverse symptoms including:

- Neck, Shoulder and Upper Back Pain
- TMJ (jaw) pain and clicking
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Decreased Respiratory Capacity
- Carpal Tunnel syndrome
- Decreased general pain tolerance due to reduced endorphin production
- Accelerated disc degeneration

So why is FHP so prevalent? The answer can be found in our modern lifestyle. Most of us spend an inordinate amount of time hunched over computers and while texting; cradling cell and land-based phones between the ear and shoulder; carrying heavy bags on one shoulder; and reading, watching TV and sleeping with the head elevated on more than one pillow. Children carry backpacks that are too heavy and improperly positioned; play hours of computer and video games; and watch too much TV, all while slouching. These habits lead to muscle fatigue and spasm, irritated spinal joints, disc compression (herniated discs, degenerative disc disease), and a general sense of stress and poor health.

So, what can you do about this condition?

- Get up and stretch every 15-20 minutes if you sit at a desk all day.
- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise daily
- Focus more on your posture, making sure you are sitting up straight with your head in an upright position.
- Use speaker phones, headsets, and ear pieces to stop cradling cell and landline phones.
- Sleep on a properly designed pillow to maintain the proper curve in your cervical spine.
- Keep the weight of your child's backpack to less than 15% of his/her body weight.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends watching television or playing video games

If you are concerned about forward head posture or you have neck/back/shoulder pain, headaches, muscle weakness in the neck, fatigue or any other symptoms that you're interested in learning more about, please call Dr. Wolin at North Castle Chiropractic (273-6777). Chiropractic care is proven to be effective in reducing or even reversing forward head posture, reducing pain and preventing further deterioration of the spine.