

The secret to good posture

By BOBBIE BLISS RASMANN, MSPT
Fischer Physical Therapy

You need to sit up straight! Do not slouch at the dinner table!" How many of us have heard these words from our mothers at one time or another? As usual, our mothers were right. We should sit and stand up straight. Good posture helps us to be more comfortable and efficient with everything we do. Good posture can be an automatic and easy thing to achieve and maintain, if you know what to do.

What is the secret to good posture? There is more to it than just putting your shoulders back and holding your head up straight. Sitting up straight starts with the hips and low back. When the low back is positioned correctly, then it is easier to keep your upper back, shoulders and head in a comfortable and more efficient position. To

sit up straight, you need to concentrate on holding your stomach muscles tight (without holding your breath) and keeping a slight forward curve in the small of your back. Think about drawing your stomach in without sucking in a lot of air. Next, focus on your upper back and shoulders. Bring your shoulder blades together and bring your shoulders back a little bit. That is a lot to think about just to sit up straight, but with a little patience and practice it will get easier and easier to maintain.

Posture can also affect how we stand, walk, run and sleep. Once you can maintain good posture while sitting, then you can start practicing holding your spine in the correct position while standing, walking and even running. Many people have difficulty sleeping because of

discomfort. For some, this can be remedied by simply positioning your back correctly in bed. For back sleepers, be sure to use a fairly flat pillow so your head is not pushed up to the ceiling and try a pillow beneath your knees to ease pressure off your low back. If you sleep on your side, use a pillow that is thick enough to keep your head between your shoulders so that your neck does bend. You may also try a pillow between your knees to keep your low back more comfortable.

So what do you do if you try all this and have difficulty achieving good posture because it causes discomfort or pain? Call a physical therapist and set up an appointment for an evaluation. They can help you achieve good posture and relieve your discomfort or pain. ■

