

THE FIVE POSTURAL HABITS OF INJURY PREVENTION

By Danielle Salomon, Physiotherapist – Bondi Junction

In his Number-one best seller, Stephen R. Covey presented a framework for personal effectiveness. Similarly, here at Physio Fitness we have presented a short list of small habit changes that can yield great results with regards to people's physical condition!

The little things we do all day without noticing can have a lot to do with why we get injured. Our postural habits or repetitive activities can be creating imbalances in our muscular system that render us vulnerable to injury when the demands on our bodies are increased, such as starting a new exercise programme or going through an intense work period. This list is to provide you with insight and advice to avoid these potentially harmful postures and habits!

HABIT # 1: Stand with equal weight on both legs



Neck and back pain is a very common complaint in today's times. Often we see floppy (hypermobile) individuals who have poor core muscle control about the trunk, hips and pelvis. They tend to lean on furniture to prop themselves up when they sit, or stand on one leg swapping from side to side. Is this you?

Standing for prolonged periods with the weight on one leg can create shortening of the inner thigh muscles (adductors) and the side trunk muscles (quadratus lumborum) on the weight-bearing leg. This habitual posture can create stiffness in the hips and lower back.

TIP: Stand evenly on both legs with the feet about hip width apart. Bring the weight back into the heels and along the outside of the foot.

HABIT # 2: Improve your desk-job etiquette

Here we are talking about the etiquette you show yourself for eight or more hours a day seated at the computer. Leaning forwards at your computer or desk for prolonged periods can result in shortening of the hip flexor muscles and overuse of the long muscles of the back to support the weight of the body, and may contribute to hip and lower back stiffness. This posture may occur when you are stressed or concentrating, or if you are having difficulty seeing your monitor.

TIP: Sit with your buttocks as far back in the chair as possible and tilt the pelvis forwards slightly creating a small inward curve in your lower back (you may require a lumbar roll to achieve this). Adjust the height of the back support so that the lumbar support fits the inward curve of your lower back. Your feet should sit firmly on the floor. If they do not, get a footrest (or yellow pages).



HABIT # 3: Stretch

Mary Schmidt advised it in her chart topper song Sunscreen (1999) and we are re-iterating the point some 11 years later. Why is it so many people hate stretching these days?



Whenever I ask my clients how much of their exercise sessions are spent stretching, they all give me a sheepish grin and admit it is more often than not, neglected.

So why stretch? As you age, your muscles tighten and range of motion in the joints can be minimized. This can put a damper on active lifestyles and even hinder day-to-day, normal motions. Tasks that used to be simple, such as zipping up a dress or reaching for a can off of the top shelf, now become extremely difficult. A regular stretching program can help lengthen your muscles and make daily living activities easier.

Stretching should be a part of your daily routine, whether you exercise or not.

There are simple stretches you can do while watching TV, on the computer, or getting ready for bed. If you are doing strength training exercises, stretch in between sets. It feels good and saves time from stretching at the end of the workout!

It does not have to involve a huge time commitment, but stretching can end up giving you huge results.

HABIT # 4: Walk

For those of you that know me, I was not born in a country where spending time outdoors was a normal part of a healthy lifestyle. One of the best things about my new life in Sydney is the ability to enjoy this beautiful city we live in. Spring is here and nothing beats a good, old fashioned walk. Walking has been proven to be one of the best forms of exercise. These are just a few of the reasons why;



- It elevates mood and lowers stress levels, due to hormones that are released as we exercise
- It is a low impact form of exercise, which means that it's gentler on the joints.
- Walking is good for cardiovascular fitness and can assist in lowering blood pressure
- It improves sleeping patterns and will assist in weight loss
- It energizes you and helps strengthen your immune system
- Improves flexibility and costs nothing!

So, why not make walking a part of your lifestyle? Perhaps as an alternative commute to work, a bonding activity with friends or family or just some good solitary time with yourself.

HABIT # 5: Be Proactive

A large majority of the injuries we see at Physio Fitness are related to over training or overuse. There are many reasons why this happens and the road to recovery is often long and requires some form of rehabilitation. Often we see patients who have had an injury for 6 months or longer (the worst being 2 years of neglecting to seek treatment!). Is this you?

Overuse injuries tend not to fix themselves despite resting (even for 2 years). The longer it takes to seek advice and treatment, the harder it is to fix the problem.

Too many invasive procedures (like cortisone injections and even surgery) are gaining popularity because injuries are neglected for such lengthy time periods. If you are suffering from an injury, seek advice from your GP or your physiotherapist. The wait-and-see method is not an effective one and will ultimately cost you in the long term. People who are successful in life (e.g. athletes, business men, politicians) take a proactive approach rather than a reactive one.

Look after your body, it's the only you have.



For appointments call us on 1300 233 300 or book online at www.physiofitness.com.au



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Dani has many years experience in Physiotherapy and currently practices at the Bondi Junction clinic. She works with many headache sufferers as well as TMJ, sports injuries and lower back pain patients.

To book an appointment with Dani call 1300 233 300 or email: reception@physiofitness.com.au