

Posture evaluation is best for determining spinal dysfunction

Question: When I look in the mirror at myself I notice my shoulder is much higher on the left than the right and my one hip is higher on the opposite side. I get constant neck, shoulder and low-back pain. What do these changes in my posture indicate and are they related to my symptoms?

Answer: Posture is the most pure identification of adaptive changes to stress in the body. Ideally, your posture should be symmetrical from your head to your toes. Your head should be centered directly over your shoulders with no forward or backward tilt. Check one ear in relationship to the other to determine head tilt. Your shoulders should be on an even plane without forward rotation or rounded posture. Your navel should be centered in the middle of your torso in relationship to your midline from your chin to the ground. Hips should be even height without one rotating forward or backward. Your knees should be facing forward and balanced from one to the other. Excessive internal or external rotation is not a normal posture. Your feet and ankles should be forward and even just as the knees are. The feet are an excellent determinant of poor weight bearing in the body and indicate just where the inappropriate forces are being redirected. When an evaluation is made of all the components of postural distortion a clear and precise diagnosis of the cause of a structural condition can be made. Combine the postural evaluation with a good history of the patient and the majority of the approach to correct the condition should be evident. Since structure and function are inseparable, correcting the structural condition can directly help the functional disorder.

An important factor to remember when looking at posture is that no matter how your body distorts itself the eyes will always be straight and the feet will touch the ground. This may seem self evident, but if you understand this then you will realize that all the other distortions in your posture are righting mechanisms to compensate for gravity pressing down on us all day. Unfortunately the greatest brunt of weight-bearing imbalance is generated to the spine where sensitive nerve tissue immediately responds sending impulses to muscles to balance us. A repetitive or individually severe response to the muscles results in spasms. This response is why you may get pain in various related joints such as your neck, low back, shoulders, etc.

I suggest you evaluate yourself in the mirror and objectively review your own posture. A Chiropractor is trained to know exactly what each distortion indicates and can treat you as well as educate you on how some or all of these changes may be corrected.

Quote of the week: *“The journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step.”* - Chinese proverb