

## **Posture**

Maintaining proper posture not only allows your joints to move freely through their ranges of motion, it also allows your organs to work more efficiently (i.e.: bowels to function, heart to pump, lungs to fill with air). The importance of good posture cannot be overemphasized, so even if you consider yourself to have poor posture, there are always ways to change.

Poor posture is often caused by muscle imbalances. Some muscles are too tight and become shortened, and others become permanently elongated and weakened. This process is termed 'plastic deformation'. An example of the effects of this process is often experienced by people who work all day in front of a computer. The rounded shoulders (shortened chest muscles and continually elongated mid back muscles) and forward drawn head position (tightness in the back of the neck and lengthening of the muscles in the front of the neck) lead to all sorts of pain patterns and discomfort. The key to changing muscle imbalances, and therefore posture, is through a specific and personalized exercise program geared to lengthening and strengthening appropriate tissues.

### **Posture tips:**

- When sitting, make sure both feet touch flat on the floor, knees should be slightly higher than the hips and spinal curvatures maintained. Use a pillow or towel behind the low back if necessary.
- Use the arm rests on your office chair to take stress off the shoulders.
- Avoid holding the phone between the shoulder and ear. Use a headset if a large part of your day is spent on the phone.
- For desk work, bring documents up to eye level to avoid hunching over with the head looking down for long periods of time.
- Take regular breaks during the day to move joints and stretch.
- Have your work station ergonomically assessed.
- The back support of your chair is only beneficial if you sit against it.
- When standing, keep one foot elevated on a box or step.
- Maintain abdominal hollow and pelvic tilt to support the low back.
- Wear supportive footwear.
- When sleeping, the use of an orthopedic pillow may be beneficial to help rest the neck and shoulder musculature.
- Do not use more than one pillow and avoid sleeping on your stomach.
- A pillow between the knees when side lying, helps minimize pelvic rotation.