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Poor posture and its causes

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Abstract

A good posture is one which requires a minimum expenditure of energy for the maintenance of good alignment, whereas utilization of excess energy and effort indicate poor posture. Good posture permits mechanically efficient functioning of joints wherein friction in the joints is minimized, tensions of opposing ligaments are balanced, and pressures within the joints are equalized, requiring minimum wear and tear of the joints. A posture can be said to be good if it fulfills the purpose with maximum efficiency and minimum efforts. To conclude, in good posture, body will be at ease involving less effort weight equally distributed, all the axis being parallel to a vertical line, the curves of the spine are not twisted, abdomen held inside, chest held high in such a way that the shoulders are in an erect position.

Keywords: Good posture, Poor posture, Acquired, Congenital.

1. Introduction

Posture concerns the way an individual carries himself while sitting, standing, walking and lying. Poor posture is the posture that results from certain muscles tightening up or shortening while others lengthen and become weak which often occurs as a result of one's daily activities. There are different factors which can impact on posture and they include occupational activities and biomechanical factors such as force and repetition. Risk factors for poor posture also include psychosocial factors such as job stress and strain. Workers who have higher job stress are more likely to develop neck and shoulder symptoms.

2. Causes of a Poor Posture

The causes of poor posture can broadly be classified into two categories:-

- (i) Acquired- due to some accident or disease.
- (ii) Congenital- present at birth or hereditary.

The deformities caused due to poor posture can be of two types:

- (i) Functional divergency, and
- (ii) Structural divergency.

The main causes of poor posture are listed below:

1. **Injury:** when a bone, ligament, or muscle is injured, it is likely to weaken the support at that point and throw the framework out of balance. When such condition exists, it is not possible to have a perfect posture. Even after the injury has fully healed, the habit developed during the injury may still persist, and faulty posture may continue for a long time.
2. **Disease:** posture is greatly affected by the disease that weakens the bones or the muscles or causes the joints to lose their strength or mobility. The examples of this kind of disease are, rickets caused due to faulty nutrition of bone, and tubercular disease of joints or vertebrae. Poliomyelitis may cause weakening or distorting of motor nerve cells in the spinal cord, and thereby causing partial or complete loss of function in certain muscle groups. This type of loss of power in muscle groups upsets the body control and balance and also causes other kind of defects.
3. **Habit:** habits of posture, whether good or bad, are acquired in the same way as the habits of walking, speaking or sitting, i.e. by practicing a certain type of coordination so many times that the act becomes unconscious and habitual. In case of school and college students, though the bones, joints, ligaments and muscles are in normal condition, but due to faulty and wrong habits, their coordination is disturbed, causing poor posture wrong

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habits of posture are also caused by occupation and environment as well.

4. **Weakness:** it is not possible to assume and maintain erect posture without expenditure of some energy. Such efforts, therefore, require some strength and endurance. Experiments have shown that slumped or slouched position of body can be maintained with quite less metabolic energy as compared to the erect position. The muscular weakness and lack of viability is thus responsible for such faulty postures.
5. **Mental Attitude:** the posture is the manner in which we carry or hold our body and it is bound to reflect our mental attitude. Feelings of happiness, confidence and satisfaction help in maintaining a balanced and erect posture, whereas depression and feeling of sadness pose hurdles in maintaining proper posture.
6. **Heredity:** heredity is another factor which is responsible for poor or defective posture. Hereditary defects like kyphosis and other genetic defects may cause poor posture.
7. **Improper Clothing:** the type of dress one wears also has impact on individual's posture. For example wearing tight fitted dress, tight shoes, high heel shoes etc. will result in adopting poor posture. Such improper clothing makes one uncomfortable and may lead to faulty posture.
8. **Improper Diet or Malnourishment:** improper diet or malnourishment may result in various diseases due to deficiencies of vitamins and minerals e.g. rickets etc. which result in adopting faulty and poor posture.
9. **Chronic Fatigue:** due to continuous work, lack of rest and sound sleep, body tends to develop fatigue, and such condition becomes chronic with persistence of such conditions. Without proper relaxation, rest and sleep, the body and the mind becomes over worked and inefficient. Such conditions put undue stress upon muscles there by causing postural deviations.
10. **Over Load:** one may develop round shoulders and deformities of spine like kyphosis and scoliosis by continuously lifting and carrying heavy weight on shoulders and the upper back. Everyday example of overloading can be observed as we find school children carrying heavy school bags on their back.
11. **Imitation:** due to over exposure of the children to popular media like TV, network etc., there is general tendency among children to imitate their favorite heroes, models, stars, teacher, friends etc, such imitation may distort their natural posture and may cause postural deviations.
12. **Unhygienic Conditions:** it is very common to find crowded class rooms with improper sitting arrangement, improper furniture, improper and insufficient lighting arrangements etc. in our country. Such unhygienic conditions result in postural deviations.
13. **Improper Time Table:** improperly planned school curriculum puts extra stress upon the children. E.g. during long practical hours they have to maintain a static and most of the time bent posture which may be a factor causing postural defects.
14. **Lack of Exercise:** exercises tone up the spinal nerves and abdominal organs, improve appetite and digestion, promotes flexibility and co-ordination, reduces mental strain, and provides energy, improves the physical ability and efficiency. Lack of exercises has several adverse effects which may lead to postural deformities and defects.

15. **Lack of Awareness:** many people are unaware regarding the concept of proper posture and continue of to follow wrong or faulty postures. This becomes their permanent habit and a life style which leads to postural defects deformities.
16. **Obesity:** obesity or undue body overweight puts extra stress and strain on the muscular as well as skeletal structure of the body which may result in postural deviations.
17. **Poverty:** lack of essential and basic facilities due to poverty is another important factor which may lead an individual to adopt bad or faulty posture.
18. **Occupation:** certain occupations require sitting, standing or working in an imbalanced or improper posture constantly for long hours, which may result in postural defects and deviations.

3. Discussion

The appropriate remedial action should be started as soon as possible. Immediate attention is required as bad posture exerts unusual and atypical stress on the soft tissues, muscles and ligaments of the body segment. Time to time screening of body posture will go a long way in preventing postural defects. It must be remembered that the means of correcting postural deviations must be based upon medical diagnosis and recommendations. As ignorance regarding the basic concept of posture is one of the major causes for postural divergences, proper knowledge regarding the importance of posture and appropriate guidance for correcting the same is necessary so as to develop a "postural sense" regarding body mechanics in the mind of an individual.

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