

Healthy Living: Four Easy Pieces to Perfect Posture

By Dr. Veronica Collings, Chiropractor and Wellness Practitioner

When we see a beautiful dancer, we may not be consciously aware of it, but one of the most impactful aspects that we are admiring is how effortlessly and elegantly he or she holds his or her body in space. That is the visual impact of perfect posture. But, according to research, posture affects and moderates every physiological function from breathing to hormonal function. Spinal pain, headache, mood, blood pressure, pulse, and lung capacity are also among the functions influenced by posture. I have clinically observed that many symptoms, including pain, may be moderated or eliminated by improved posture.

With the variety of posture-“ruining” habits that we have developed over the years, it is very important to embrace a routine of “posture hygiene” at home. The following four-prong approach can correct even the most stubborn deformations. Hunched over and collapsed (Dowager’s hump), rolled in shoulders, neck jutting inches in front of the body or buttock out with belly spilling forward and any combination of the above. Sounds like a daunting task, but, with the following four tools and some commitment to persevere, in less than a year, you will see a much more elegant dancer in the mirror.

1. A physical therapy rehabilitative approach to posture and fitness can be accomplished in a short 15 minutes, four times per week, in front of your TV. No equipment to buy, no weights to lift and, in the comfort of your home, you can regain the youthful healthy posture you were designed to have before “Nintendo neck” ruined your kids and computer work ruined you! A brilliant physical therapist, Teresa Tapp, developed a system of exercise that uses isometric moves with compound muscle movements to deliver the promise of good posture and fitness which leads to good health. Her information can be accessed from my web site, www.drveronicacollings.com. Scroll down on the home page to weight management and fitness, click on the link and, under the section on posture, a banner will lead you to the product that I recommend. She offers many different programs. The Basic Workout will do the trick in the shortest time and for the least cost; about \$40 is all you need to spend.

2. The next correction needed is to our sitting posture. Conventional chairs in which most of us spend our workday cause our backs to slump, our shoulders to roll in, and our necks to jut forward. More than 20 years ago, I discovered a Swedish design chair that corrects these stresses and, coincidentally, eliminates the chronic neck, shoulder, and low back pain that so often develops from sitting too much. This ergonomic “kneeling chair” not only corrects posture, but makes sitting a pleasure. Many good companies sell this chair. I refer my patients to “Sitbetter” because, over all the years that I have been recommending this chair, this company has never let me down. There are several good examples of this technology in its inventory. To see what they look like and the ones that I recommend, visit my site again under fitness. Another banner should direct you to my favorites. Because I have referred so many clients to them, the company gave me a discount code for my patients which I am happy to share with you. Enter **45PX88RR** and you will receive 5% off your first purchase. The chairs run from \$95 to \$399 for the Jazzy Deluxe with the backrest. I’ve been sitting on the \$95 one for 15 years and I still love it.

3. Walking posture is the biggest culprit of distortion. When primitive man walked barefoot on soft ground or sand, his body weight naturally positioned over his frame: the weight back onto the heels of the feet and onto the supportive skeleton. Somewhere along the line, some genius decided to thwart this posture perfect design by adding heels to our shoes. This effectively throws our entire weight forward onto the balls of our feet, where it does not belong. Eventually, all this weight forward with no supportive structure collapses our frame. The older we get, the more collapsed and hunched over we appear.

This, too, can be corrected. Shoes with a negative heel that mimic walking barefoot in the sand, by naturally positioning the body weight over the frame, improve posture and remove joint stress. Foot, knee, hip, and low back pain are just some of the areas that improve as a result of wearing these shoes. I’ve been wearing Kalso Earth Shoes for everything except dancing since 2003. My personal gains and the gains of

hundreds of my patients from restoring the proper weight distribution of my body have been amazing. I stand for as many as 12 hours on a cement slab. Before I discovered Earth shoes, finding foot comfort was the bane of my existence. Now I rarely think about my feet unless I've been in dance shoes for several days in a row and then I dig into my chiropractic bag of tricks for relief. No, I will not wear Earth shoes on the dance floor, but 90% of the time that I am in shoes, I am at work or running around town with Earth shoes.

This compensates for the 10% of the time in dance shoes. By the way, if you remember the ugly Earth shoes of the 1970's, these are not those shoes. There are hundreds of current designs and hundreds of purveyors that carry them. Personally, I shop at PlanetShoes.com; however, lately, I've seen lots of great deals on Amazon.com. Everything from dress shoes to boots, to sneakers to sandals, you name it. Earth does a good job of staying current with today's styles, but, of course, you are not going to see high heels. They did manage to come up with a few negative heel platform designs which gave me about 1¼ inch in much needed height, so I do wear those on social occasions. When you get a pair, break them in gradually. They are a dramatic correction to posture and, although most people feel the relief instantly, you may need some time to adapt. Within about three days of wearing Earth shoes, you'll wonder how you ever walked in anything else.

Last, but not least, what to do to recover from the postural damage of old injuries, traumas, surgeries, and other posture debilitating history. That's where chiropractic care ensures that you regain your balance and alignment. Most people don't know that there are over 150 certified chiropractic techniques. These techniques share the common purpose of removing nerve interference and irritation from the spine and other joints of the body. Removing this irritation allows your body to return to normal function, including healing and postural ease. To learn more about the non-force techniques that I practice (affectionately referred to as "chiropractic without the crack") and to find websites for practitioners near you, visit my site at www.drveronicacollings.com.

If these four steps to perfect posture seem overwhelming, think of it this way. You've been meaning to start a formal fitness program anyway. T-Tapp will get it done for you in one hour per week. You have to put shoes on, no matter what - you may as well put some on that will help you instead of hurt you, and the same with sitting at work. Finally, if you have been putting off taking care of chronic or current injuries, looking great on the dance floor is a perfect excuse to get it done. Even implementing just one of these suggestions will make a big difference in how you look and feel. Then you can build on your success and try the next one that appeals to you most!

Good luck and I hope to see you looking great on the dance floor.

Dr. V Recommends the Ergonomic Kneeling Chair



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