

# Massage & Body Maintenance

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

## The Importance of Proper Posture

### Correct Alignment Leads to Better Health

Hope Bentley

Talk of good posture often generates images of women walking in a circle with books balanced on their heads or soldiers standing at attention. But good posture does not have to be rigid or ridiculous. In fact, far from ridiculous, it may be the key to good health.

According to Patrick Wroblewski, a Boulder, Colorado-based structural integration practitioner, "Good posture is a dynamic, working awareness of how gravity is coming down through the body." In other words, just as the body moves and changes throughout the day, so should posture.

Wroblewski explains that many people come in to his practice with complaints

misalignment, like standing with a hip cocked to one side. These common forms of less-than-perfect posture mean less-than-healthy consequences for the body.

### Does Posture Matter?

Ever feel low on energy? Get sick often? Experience headaches or digestive upset, like constipation or diarrhea? Feel less agile than you used to be? Your postural habits may be behind these symptoms.

Proper posture means the body is aligned so that all the muscles work as they were designed to. On the other hand, poor posture leads to inefficient

*He who has health has hope; and he who has hope has everything.*

- Thomas Fuller



Working in front of a computer often leads to poor posture. Learn how to counteract the effects.

of lower back pain, and stiff necks and shoulders, most of which have a direct correlation to poor posture. If a person sits hunched in front of a computer screen all day, it's likely the head hovers towards the screen, the lower back has collapsed and the tail bone is supporting the weight, and legs are crossed or splayed. Bad standing posture includes the same hunching or lateral

movement, causing the muscles to have to do extra work. For instance, if the head isn't resting correctly on top of the neck and spine but hovers over the chest instead, the muscles at the back of the neck have to remain contracted to hold the head up. The results? Circulation becomes hindered, and oxygen and

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nutrients have a hard time flowing through the body. Contracted muscles are less able to receive hydration and energy, and the tissue eventually becomes hard and fibrous. Eventually, muscles can pull bones out of alignment and cause serious problems and discomfort.

The bottom line is, poor posture can lead to muscular stress and fatigue, which can in turn lead to deficient circulation, compromised immunity, and poor lymph flow--which brings us back to low energy, frequent illness, headaches, digestive issues, and waning agility. So to answer our earlier question, yes, posture matters.

## Perfecting Posture

Correcting poor posture requires undoing the hardening, or fibrosis, of the muscles that have been habitually contracted, allowing them to relax and the bones to move back into place. Perhaps a simple concept, but not an easy task.

Wroblewski uses a combination of techniques to help correct posture: Swedish massage can help increase circulation and release chronically held areas. Deep tissue massage helps wake up the body and reverse some of the fibrosis in the tissue. And other bodywork techniques can further precipitate postural adjustments. He says, "Any kind of manipulation--craniosacral, acupressure--can cause an unwinding of tension and allow the body to release to the position in which it belongs."

Wroblewski also recommends movement education, an umbrella term that includes many types of bodywork, such as Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Hellerwork, and Trager Approach. Movement education advocates that one's body structure and movements can get stuck in habitual, unhealthy patterns. Movement education unwinds the patterns and teaches the body, as well as the mind, anew. This is done through a series of sessions where practitioners may use hands-on manipulation to teach the student different, more efficient ways to move, sit, stand, reach, bend, lift and walk. Ultimately, this balances the body and allows energy to move freely.

Movement education techniques may be

especially beneficial for people suffering from chronic difficulties, but also for anyone trying to achieve higher levels of physical and mental wellness.

According to Wroblewski, bodywork can induce a "neutral reprogramming," so that people can start from scratch and learn to recognize when good posture is breaking down. Then the necessary adjustments can be made.

## What's a Body To Do?

Desk jobs are notorious for wreaking havoc and causing postural impairments. Sitting for hours on end staring at a computer screen is likely one of the worst things you can do to your body. If you spend a lot of time sitting, make sure both feet are flat on the ground to give yourself a "tripod" of stability for the spine to rest on. Also, be sure to take frequent breaks, even if it just means walking to the window for a

moment, or getting a glass of water. And when standing, distribute weight evenly between both feet, and don't lock the knees or ankles.

Good posture takes practice, practice, practice and constant reminding. Wroblewski suggests leaving reminders in places where you will run into them throughout your day.

Old habits die hard, and this is true for muscular habits too. Be sure to schedule a series of massage treatments to help retrain the body. And talk to your practitioner about stretches and posture tips that can enhance your massage sessions. As you progress, you will notice less joint and muscle pain, fewer headaches, more energy, and possibly even stronger immunity and better digestion. Finally, you will develop a stronger awareness of your body and an increased sense of well being.



Practice makes perfect! Good postural habits require repetition and practice, practice, practice.

# What Is Reiki?

## Understanding Energy Work

A type of energy bodywork, reiki (pronounced ray-key) relies on the ancient belief in the life force energy, referred to as chi, that flows through all things. This life force runs throughout pathways in the body called meridians, nourishing organs and cells and supporting vital functions. When this energy is disrupted by negative thoughts, feelings or actions, illness and disease result. A reiki practitioner's hands hover just above a person's body, sensing the affected areas and infusing them with positive flow. This raises the energetic vibration and breaks up the negativity to heal, clear and restore the natural flow of the life force. The reiki practitioner, trained to access and serve as a channel for the life energy, places his hands on or just above the client's body and uses a passive touch that some clients experience with warmth or tingling. The hands remain in position for 3-5 minutes, alternately covering 10-12 positions over the body.

Thought to be Tibetan Buddhist in

origin, the practice of reiki is comprised of three levels of training. Through this training, the practitioner learns how to access energy flow through the hands to heal. Completion of the third and highest level of training results in the title of reiki master. Reiki is used to accelerate healing, assist the body in cleansing toxins, balance the flow of subtle energy by releasing blockages, and help the client contact the healer within.

According to [www.reiki.org](http://www.reiki.org), reiki is beginning to gain acceptance as a meaningful and cost-effective way to improve patient care in hospitals and clinics across America. In an interview on the website, Dr. David Guillion, an oncologist at Marin General Hospital in California, says, "I feel we need to do whatever is in our power to help the patient. We provide state of the art medicine in our office, but healing is a multidimensional process. I endorse the idea that there is a potential healing that can take place utilizing energy." For more information, consult your

bodywork practitioner.



Reiki balances subtle but vital energy.

# Hemp Nutrition

## Set Aside Stereotypes For This Wonder Food

Shelley Burns, N.D.

While hemp has often been negatively associated with marijuana, it actually has very little mind-altering tetrahydro-cannabinol (THC) in it—just 0.3 percent in hemp, compared with the 3-15 percent found in marijuana. And in parts of the world, it has been used to make clothing, bedding, and rope thousands of years.

Now more recently, hemp and its good balance of antioxidants, carbohydrates, fats, and proteins is being viewed as a health-promoting, disease-preventing food. Its derivatives include hemp oil, hemp butter, hemp protein powder, and newest of all, hemp milk. Hemp milk is positioned to compete with other non-dairy alternatives like soy, rice, and almond milk.

HEMP'S POWERFUL PROPERTIES PROVIDE A

### NUMBER OF BENEFITS:

- Its antioxidant content counteracts environmental toxins.
- Its carbohydrates help increase energy, improve endurance performance during exercise, and keep the mind at peak performance.
- Hemp seeds have more dietary protein than soybeans, meat, fish, chicken, cheese, and milk. Hemp protein has the added benefit of being gluten-free.
- Hemp contains all nine essential amino acids, the building blocks of cells, antibodies, muscle tissue, and enzymes.
- Hemp is loaded with essential fatty acids (EFAs), which are required for maintaining good neurological,

digestive, and skin health.

- Hemp has a low-cholesterol content and a high content in natural phytosterols that also reduce cholesterol levels.
- Hemp is helpful in preventing conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, and asthma.
- Hemp is also good for the planet. As a low-maintenance plant that grows just about anywhere, needs little or no pesticides, and is an ideal crop for organic, sustainable farming.

*Sometimes your  
joy is the source  
of your smile,  
but sometimes  
your smile can  
be the source of  
your joy.*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

When a muscle becomes tight, it becomes inefficient. It cannot elongate and protect the joints fast enough to avoid damage. Massage helps to improve muscle elasticity by stretching and lengthening shortened muscles, which can help you avoid injury.

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