

Punctuate Your Posture!

Do you look like a comma when you look in the mirror? Do your neck, shoulders and head hurt? If this is you, you need to change your posture from a comma to an exclamation mark!

Here are four tips to get you standing and sitting better.

1. Practise sliding your shoulder blades downwards. Think "sliding them into your back pants pockets". This will allow you to extend through your thoracic spine - the part of your spine that runs between the base of your neck and the middle of your back. This will help you to open up through your chest and take your shoulders away from a very rounded position. Do several of these every day. (Get up from your chair and do them!)

2. Stretch your upper trapezius and levator scapulae (upper back and neck muscles), and your pectoral (chest) muscles. A bent-over, flexed-spine posture encourages these muscles to tighten and restricts proper movement.

3. Do chin tucks daily to strengthen the muscles that keep your head aligned over your shoulders (upper thoracic extensors). When you have done these for a couple of days, combine the tucks with Tip #1, sliding your shoulder blades downwards. To add resistance, hold a light or medium strength tubing in your hands, with thumbs pointing up to the ceiling. As you pull your hands away from each

other, do the chin tuck and shoulder blade slide.

4. Strengthen your abdominal muscles. Start with the basics like the abdominal vacuum and plank. You can then add side to side movement to the plank, or raise one arm off the ground for a few seconds to intensify the work in your abs. Avoid crunches or curl-ups - they pose risk to the lumbar spine, and encourage poor and painful neck movement.

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