How “Hunched Over” Posture Causes Back Pain and How to Fix It

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Bad Posture and Back Pain

If you’re sitting (or standing) hunched over for hours every day, it may be contributing to your chronic back pain.

A "hunched over" posture, also known as "forward head posture" or "upper crossed syndrome," causes various muscles to shorten and become tight over time.

As a result, this can create excessive stress on various vertebrae in your back which may be a contributing cause of the back pain you feel.

How exactly does poor posture contribute to back pain? And more importantly, what can you do to fix it?

Effects of Poor Posture on Lower Back Pain

Regardless if you are sitting or standing, poor posture will put more pressure on your spine than sitting or standing with good posture.

Additionally, poor posture (and excessive sitting in general) eventually leads to very tight hip flexors which pull the front of the pelvis down and results in something called "anterior pelvic tilt."

This condition is characterized by an excessive arch in the lower back which causes strain and pain in the area. To make matters worse, the glutes (which normally prevent anterior pelvic tilt from developing) become weak and inactive.

Although this may not be the root cause of your back pain, I highly suggest that you try out the fixes listed later on in this article and see if it provides any lower back pain relief.

Effects of Poor Posture on Upper Back Pain

"Forward head posture" or "upper crossed syndrome" from poor posture are common conditions that can contribute to pain in the cervical (upper) region of your back.

These conditions are characterized by the head protruding forward, a rounded upward back, and forwardly rounded shoulders. It is a long-term result of poor posture either while sitting or standing.

The reason this affects your upper back is that the forward pull of the weight of the head puts stress on the vertebrae of the lower neck.

Similarly, this hunched over posture causes the muscles of the upper back to become strained and overworked since they must counterbalance the pull of gravity on the protruding head.

This creates a lot of shear stress on the cervical vertebrae which over time can lead to degenerative disc disease, painful trigger points, and a host of other problems.

Thus, it is vital that you fix your posture in order to minimize your risk of accumulating these problems and to potentially alleviate your back pain.

Below I'm going to show various tools, stretches, and tips you should be doing in order to correct your poor posture.

Effective Ways to Correct Poor Posture

1. Back Stretchers

These are simple tools yet provide you with an effective stretch to open up your chest and shoulders. It assists you in lengthening your pectoralis minor and major as well as your tight front delts, which are the major muscles causing your "hunched" posture.

To properly use a back stretcher, simply follow the steps below:

1. Lay down and place the device on your mid/upper back and raise your arms up straight over your head.
2. Relax in this arched position for around 2-5 minutes at a time and repeat a few times a day.

Tip: Make sure you choose an appropriate arch setting on the back stretcher for your back.

Too steep of an arch will likely cause pain and discomfort, whereas too flat of an arch won't provide many benefits. After weeks of regular use, you'll notice your posture slowly starting to correct itself.

There are also several other tools that can help provide relief and correct posture by relieving trigger points. A neck and shoulder

A neck and shoulder massager are ideal for relieving and eliminating trigger points that are created as a result of poor posture.

You can get an electric one to use during car rides or on your chair at home, or you can simply use a lacrosse ball (or tennis ball) to manually roll out sensitive trigger points.

2. Static Stretches

Doorway Stretch

This is an excellent stretch to open up and loosen your chest and shoulder muscles. Simply place your hands on both sides of a doorway, and lean forward until you feel an adequate stretch. Do this stretch a few times a day for around 30 seconds each time.

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Hip Flexor Stretch

This one is the perfect way to loosen up your hip flexors that have been shortened from prolonged sitting and poor posture.

Place one foot in front and one behind, and bend the front leg to a 90-degree angle. Then, lean forward by extending the back leg until you feel a stretch in the hip flexor of the front leg. Hold this for around 30 seconds and repeat a few times a day.

Tips for Proper Posture

Tips for proper standing posture:

- Keep your feet shoulder-width apart
- Avoid locking the knees (keep them just slightly bent)
- Tuck your chin in and ensure that your head is not sticking out forward in order to keep it aligned with the spine
- Stand straight and tall with your shoulders upright rather than slouched
- Think about standing so that a straight line is able to follow through your head, hips, and down in between your feet

Tips for proper sitting posture:

- Align your back with the back of your chair
- Avoid slouching or leaning forward
- For prolonged sitting, use a high-quality chair that is ergonomically designed to support the back
- Knees should be even with the hips or slightly higher
- Both feet should be flat on the floor
- Tuck your chin in and ensure that your head is not protruding forward
- Take frequent walks (at least every hour) and stretch as needed

In summary, you need to be mindful of your posture and make an effort to improve it.

It will allow you to feel better, reduce your risk for injuries, prevent imbalances, and potentially relieve your chronic back pain.

Use the various tips discussed in this article and you'll notice an improvement in no time!