

Health Connection

Your Good Health Newsletter

Volume 13, No. 2

Winter 2004

10 Steps to Perfect Posture

by Christopher Anselmi, DC, Chiropractor
Integrative Care Center

Contents

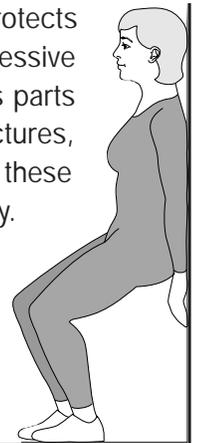
- 1 10 Steps to Perfect Posture
- 2 Myositis and Scleroderma:
Two Rare Rheumatic
Disorders
New Wellness Program
at HSS
- 3 Finding the Right
Connection for People
with Lupus
From the Studio
- 4 How Yoga Changed
My Life with Lupus
From the Editor
- 5 Do You Use or Abuse
Your Hands?
- 6 Health Link
Affiliated Physician Offices

HOSPITAL
FOR
**SPECIAL
SURGERY**



Good posture is a state of muscular and skeletal balance that protects the supporting structures of the body against injury or progressive deformity. When a person has a faulty relationship with various parts of the body, this can produce increased strain on skeletal and joint structures, producing a less efficient balance of the body over its base of support. If these postural faults persist, they can give rise to discomfort, pain or disability.

Your spine is composed of three basic curves in the neck, mid-back and lower/lumbar region. These curves form an S-shape that act like a spring, absorbing the shock of nature and gravity. When the curves are in proper alignment, each bone has the job of supporting and moving your musculoskeletal system. If one of these bones becomes mis-aligned, you can experience joint pain and discomfort. A chiropractor's primary responsibility is to analyze the human frame and detect any postural imbalances that may be causing joint pain. A chiropractic adjustment is designed to re-align misplaced bones and joints, thereby allowing the body its greatest chance for perfect posture.



When assessing posture, the best place to start is looking directly in the mirror. Check for symmetry from one side to the other. Follow these 10 simple and easy steps for checking posture:

1. Ear height is the same from side to side. If one ear looks higher or lower than the other, this could place stress on the joints of the upper cervical spine and lead to problems such as headaches.
2. Shoulder height is equal from side to side. You may notice a high shoulder on the same side of your dominant hand. This is common, but can still produce problems with posture.
3. Are your hands at the same level, or is one higher or lower than the other? This usually correlates with shoulder height barring no history of broken bones or dislocated shoulders.
4. Do your hips look even or is one hip hiked up farther than the other? Issues like sciatica or lower back pain are common with a pelvis that has become mis-aligned.
5. Are your legs symmetrical in shape? Is one knee buckled forward or bent in a sideways position?
6. Turn to the side to check your lateral position. In this position, you can find postural faults directly related to your ergonomic setup. Poor computer monitor position is a leading reason why patients experience neck discomfort.

- continued on page 2

10 Steps to Perfect Posture continued

7. Is your ear directly over the center of the shoulder? For each degree of anterior or forward head translation, your head places ten pounds of added pressure to your neck. That could put tremendous stress on the joints of your upper spine and lead to a host of problems throughout your back.
8. Does your shoulder line up with the center of your hips? Think about a straight line bisecting your body from your ear downward. Forward shoulder placement is common with conditions like sway back (curving of the lower back). If your chest muscles are particularly tight, this can pull the shoulders forward. This is easy to correct and very helpful in the relief of mid-back pain.
9. Are your knees basically just below your hips? If they are too far forward or backward, this can tell a chiropractor a lot about lower back pain and the role your musculoskeletal system is playing in your postural faults.
10. Do your ankles fall directly under your knees? Again, any asymmetry can lead to foot and ankle issues as well as spinal problems.

When your skeletal system and muscles of the body are functioning the way they were designed, they allow for optimum posture and movement and a pain free life. Early intervention is the best way to prevent postural deformities. It is never too late to start on the path to perfect posture.

Myositis and Scleroderma: Two Rare Rheumatic Disorders

by Angela Hunter, CSW
Myositis Support Group Coordinator
Patient Care and Quality
Management Department

While some types of arthritis, like osteoarthritis, are very common, other rheumatic disorders, such as myositis and scleroderma, are quite rare. Inflammatory myopathies, such as myositis, are diseases of the muscle where there is swelling and muscle loss. Myositis can cause profound muscle weakness and inflammation. Patients can have trouble getting out of a chair, lifting themselves when they have fallen or walking up stairs. Scleroderma, a chronic, autoimmune disorder of the connective tissue characterized by build-up of collagen in internal organs and marked skin changes, is also very rare.

People with rare rheumatic disorders such as these can feel very alone. When diagnosed, often after a long and frustrating wait, they usually have never even heard of the illness and neither have their family or friends. Support groups, such as Hospital for Special Surgery's Myositis Support Group and Scleroderma Support Group, provide, in many cases, the first opportunity to meet another person with the same diagnosis and offer a special forum to learn, share and cope.

New Wellness Program at HSS

The Public and Patient Education Department is proud to present *Gentle Yoga for Osteoporosis*. This new, ongoing wellness program is designed to introduce yoga postures intended to strengthen the skeletal system and help maintain healthy bones.

Yoga can play a key role in creating a comprehensive personnel fitness program to help prevent and manage osteoporosis.

For further information about this program, call 212.606.1057.

Register online at:
www.hss.edu/shopping



Summer 2003
HealthConnection
Your Good Health Newsletter



Winner of the 2004
APEX Award for
Publication Excellence

Finding the Right Connection for People with Lupus

by Wendy Doran, LMSW, Charla de Lupus/LupusLine Coordinator
and Karen Ng, BA, LANtern Program Coordinator, Department of Patient Care and Quality Management

Imagine you are diagnosed with a chronic illness but cannot ask questions about the disease. Imagine you are told to take a list of different medications when you are accustomed to visiting a traditional healer for herbal tonics. Imagine that your family members call you 'lazy' and 'weak' because they do not understand that fatigue is a prevailing symptom of your illness. Dealing with lupus itself is already complicated enough without these extra obstacles.

Lupus is a serious, chronic, inflammatory disease that can affect all different organs of the body, including the skin, joints, blood, heart, lungs, and kidneys. One of the mysteries of lupus is why it affects minorities at a higher rate than Caucasians. Research shows a greater prevalence of lupus in African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians, and the condition tends to be more active and serious in these populations.

A person's cultural background and health belief system can directly impact their medical condition and access to health information. Language and cultural barriers can prevent a lupus patient from receiving optimal care. Lupus is a very complex and unpredictable disease. Symptoms vary from one person to the next. One person may have mild skin rashes while another may have severe kidney involvement. Symptoms can come and go during periods of flares and remissions. The uncertainties of the illness can cause anxiety, sadness, and fear. Relationships with friends and family members may change and cause tension, guilt, and shame. Sometimes these challenges are not recognized in the communities most

affected by lupus.

To provide additional assistance, Hospital for Special Surgery created several support and education programs to help people cope with lupus. What makes these programs unique is the concept of peers helping peers. Clients receive help from trained volunteers (called peer health educators) who also have

"It is such a relief to find someone to talk to who helps me find the strength and courage to deal with my lupus."

- Lupus patient

lupus and who are from a similar cultural background. This allows people to feel more comfortable talking about their feelings and concerns because they know the peer health educator probably shares some of their values, customs and beliefs. In this way, clients connect with someone who really understands what they are going through.

Charla de Lupus /Lupus Chat was created to meet the needs of the Hispanic and African American communities. It began in 1994 as a sister program to LupusLine, a peer-counseling program offering phone support for people with lupus. Charla offers a bilingual English/Spanish Charla Line, in-person assistance at hospital clinics in the New York area and participation in community health events. Charla also addresses the needs of teens with lupus and their families. Charla offers a free educational booklet written specifically for teens with lupus, and monthly Teen and Parent Chat Groups for families in the NYC area.

For more information, call 212.606.1958 or 866.812.4494 toll-free outside NYC.

LANtern (Lupus Asian Network) is an outreach and education program targeting Asian Americans with lupus and their families. Our trained volunteers are fluent in Mandarin and Cantonese, and offer support and education through our LANtern Line. The program also offers educational material on lupus in Chinese. For more information, call 212.774.2508 or 866.505.2253 toll-free outside NYC.

There may be a lot we still do not know about lupus, but we do know that programs like Charla and LANtern provide ways to make living with it easier. As one client said, "It is such a relief to find someone to talk to who helps me find the strength and courage to deal with my lupus."

HSS's lupus support programs—LupusLine, Charla de Lupus, and LANtern—are all made possible through the generous contributions of Rheuminations, Inc., a private foundation that also provides major support for lupus-related research and education through the Mary Kirkland Center for lupus research. We gratefully thank Rheuminations, Inc. for its steadfast commitment to HSS and its dedication to enhancing the quality of life for people with lupus as it seeks to find a cure.

From the Studio

"The class is very good and helpful in getting me to move areas of my body and stretch muscles and joints."

-Josie M. Piper,
Yoga-lates participant

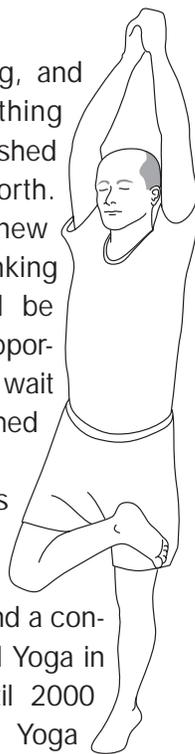
How Yoga Changed My Life with Lupus

by Jeannie Ng, Certified Yoga Instructor, Public and Patient Education Department

Lupus means “wolf” in Latin, and having been afflicted with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) since adolescence, I felt that a wolf lived in me. I was at this wolf’s mercy, and whenever the wolf awakened, I suffered the consequences of its roar. Needless to say, I struggled with health problems for a large part of my life. The struggles were harsh at times-nagging aches and pains and sleepless nights. The incessant visits to the doctor’s office appeared to be a job in itself. The feeling of being ‘not right’ would not go away. I felt limited in what I could do, and in many ways, felt cheated out of the things life had to offer. It made me

feel empty and lacking, and definitely added nothing to my already diminished sense of self worth. Fearful to take on new challenges and thinking that my health would be compromised, many opportunities were lost. The wait for a better day seemed endless.

The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit root yuj, which means, “to join.” In my quest to find a constant in my life, I found Yoga in 1996. It was not until 2000 that my journey with Yoga



became a way of life for me. The experiences, learned and shared, taught me to enjoy life and live life more fully and passionately. I felt whole.

Today, I am a certified yoga teacher of two years and am proud to be me. Yoga has empowered me, enabling me to accept and honor myself. My life is not of any less value than another person. Everyone has flaws, and I am no different. Life is a precious gift. This realization enabled me to embrace life one day at a time, and be thankful each day for another day. My wait for a better day is over. This is as good as it gets, and it is **wonderful**.

From the Editor

NEWS AND VIEWS

Osteoporosis Risk Self-Test

As with other health conditions, certain individuals are more likely to develop osteoporosis than others. Are you at risk for osteoporosis? Check the box or boxes below that apply to you.

- Do you smoke?
- Are you female?
- Are you a Caucasian or Asian-American female?
- Are you over the age of 50?
- Do you exercise less than 3-4 times per week?
- Has someone in your family been diagnosed with osteoporosis?

The more boxes you checked, the more at risk you are of being diagnosed with osteoporosis. If you think you may be at risk, consult your physician to determine if you should be evaluated, and also discuss ways to lower your risk.

Massage Therapy at HSS

Massage Therapy has been shown to help relieve stress and pain, reduce blood pressure and boost the immune system.

Hospital for Special Surgery’s Rehabilitation Department currently offers massage therapy services, including therapeutic, sports and relaxation massage.

For further information, contact Dennis Noonan, Licensed Massage Therapist, ATC at 212.774.7347.

Arthritis Quiz: Know the Facts

Arthritis affects millions of people, young and old, and is second only to heart disease as the leading cause of work disability. Test your knowledge of one of the most prevalent chronic health concerns (see pg 5 for answers).

True or False:

- T or F Low-impact exercise helps people with arthritis manage the pain associated with the condition.
- T or F There are 20 different forms of arthritis.
- T or F Arthritis and rheumatic diseases cost the U.S. economy over \$85 million annually.
- T or F Rheumatoid Arthritis is the most common form of arthritis.

Do You Use or Abuse Your Hands?

by Bethel Balsam, OTR/L Occupational Therapist, Rehabilitation Department

When you go to a store, do you steal your items after deciding the line is too long, or wait in line and pay? Hopefully, a long time ago, you made a conscious decision to live a good life, and now, every time you go the store, you automatically stand in line and buy your products. If you are in a hurry, you might hesitate and think twice about waiting in line or leaving. Either way, you know what options are available, and you make smart choices.

Do you know that you have options regarding how you use your arthritic hands? Hands with arthritis do not always have to hurt. If you prevent hand use with pain five times during the day, you have protected your hand joints from abuse that many times per day.

Think about when your hands hurt. Activities such as gripping and pinching can often cause pain. Sometimes the affects of poor body mechanics are not appreciated until after the activity is completed. When using the concept of joint protection, you change the activity so that your arthritis is not aggravated by it.

Activities should be done in a manner to minimize the pain and inflammation caused by stress to the joints. Being mindful of joint protection even



on 'good days' may lead to more productive days and weeks.

Here are some pointers for preserving your joints:

- Increasing the circumference of an object promotes the use of larger joints to do the same motion and decreases stress to the smaller ones. Built-up handles are easy to grasp and perfect for

people with arthritis or other hand weaknesses.

- Avoiding 'death grips' allows for the least amount of force to get the job done. For example, pouring shampoo out of the bottle rather than squeezing is a simple way to reduce force.
- Holding objects between the palms of both hands to lift/carry will preserve the smaller joints. For example, use your palms to push/slide objects on countertops.
- Holding joints or using muscles in one position for long periods of time puts the hand in awkward positions as fatigue and pain set in. Learn to take breaks. Do not hold what can be set down or placed in a bag hanging from the forearm/shoulder.
- Never rest your head on the back of your hand, or push

yourself out of bed using your knuckles.

- Try using either the larger joints of the arm, or even other parts of the body to accomplish a stressful task, and always ask for assistance when possible.

There are a wide variety of built-up kitchen utensils, foot controls and ways to modify tasks. The overall goal of becoming aware of your body mechanics is to decrease the stress and decrease or even avoid the pain in your small hand joints while living with arthritis.

Make a decision to be good to your hands and stick to it so that eventually, joint protection becomes automatic, like waiting in line at the store.



1. True. Exercise helps ease arthritis pain and increases range of motion. Your physician or physical therapist can show you range-of-motion and strengthening exercises that are good for arthritis.
2. False. There are more than 100 types of arthritis and related conditions.
3. False. Arthritis and rheumatic diseases cost the U.S. economy over \$85 billion annually in medical payments and lost productivity.
4. False. Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of arthritis.

Answers:
Know the Facts
Arthritis Quiz:



**Hospital for
Special Surgery**
535 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021

**Patient Care
and Quality**

Management Department
212.606.1271

Arthritis Foundation
www.arthritis.org

Lupus Foundation of America
www.lupus.org

Scleroderma Foundation
www.scleroderma.org

Myositis Association
www.myositis.org



Hospital for Special Surgery is an affiliate of
NewYork-Presbyterian Healthcare System and
Weill Medical College of Cornell University



Hospital for Special Surgery is a
participating organization of the
Bone and Joint Decade

Hospital for Special Surgery offers
premier health care services in your
community. Contact our affiliated
physician offices for more information.

New York

- **Burke Rehabilitation Office**
(White Plains)
914.948.0050 Ext. 2332
- **Huntington Office (Long Island)**
631.423.4090
- **Integrative Care Center**
212.224.7900
- **Uniondale (Long Island)**
516.222.8881

New Jersey

- **Lawrenceville Office**
609.896.9190
- **Princeton Office**
609.683.5500

Connecticut

- **Greenwich Office**
203.698.8887

The Education Division's Public and Patient Education Department provides information to the general public and patients through a variety of health education programs. Professionals provide practical information to help prevent or manage health problems related to different types of arthritis or orthopaedic problems. Programs are held at the hospital as well as in the community. The department is dedicated to providing education today, so that everyone can have a healthier tomorrow.

Laura Robbins, DSW
Vice President, Education and Academic Affairs

Chandler Wilson, MPA, CFMMS
Assistant Director
Publications and Communications
Newsletter Editor

JBRH Advertising Layout David Rosenzweig
Illustration

HealthConnection is published biannually by the Public and Patient Education Department at Hospital for Special Surgery as a service to the general public and patients. For further information regarding material contained in this newsletter or inquiries on how to obtain additional copies contact:

Public and Patient Education Department
tel: 212.606.1057 fax: 212.734.3833
e-mail: education@hss.edu

All rights reserved.
© 2004 Hospital for Special Surgery

Printed on recycled paper

HSS Education Division
*Programs Promoting
Musculoskeletal Health*
www.hss.edu

**Specialists
in Mobility**



**HOSPITAL
FOR
SPECIAL
SURGERY**

535 East 70th Street
New York, NY 10021

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 52