In a Slump? Fix your Posture

Most people are familiar with the telltale look of aging — the slouching posture that makes men look small and feeble. Age can wear down the discs in your spine, which causes them to compress. "This is one reason why men lose height as they get older," says Dr. David Binder of the Orthopaedic Spine Center at Harvard-affiliated Massachusetts General Hospital.

Still, most changes in posture are a result of bad habits, such as sitting hunched over and not standing correctly. "Over time, these habits can create muscle weakness and imbalances that trigger spasms and place stress on your neck, low back, and shoulders," says Dr. Binder.

Poor posture also can interfere with an active life. You can lose strength and flexibility, which makes you susceptible to injury. "You also may compensate for your limitations and imbalances by adjusting your posture when you sit and stand, which can only worsen your natural alignment," says Dr. Binder.

Good posture is a combination of mechanics and muscle. "Healthy posture depends on the right movements and alignments of your hips, spine, neck, and jaw, as well as surrounding muscles that offer support," says Dr. Binder.

Everyone's ideal posture is different, as it depends on your height and body composition. The best way to identify the right posture for you is to see a physical therapist. "He or she can measure the angles of your neck and back when you sit, stand, and walk, and then teach you the correct posture and alignment you need to attain."

Move around - Holding any position for a long time can lead to pain. If you have to sit or stand for long periods, try setting a timer on your phone, or a fitness tracker if you wear one, to remind you to get up at least every 20 minutes and move around.

Get your vision checked - Poor eyesight can make you thrust your head forward in order to read. See an optometrist every year, or as directed by your physician.

Adopt posture-improving exercise - A physical therapist can design an all-around muscle strengthening and stretching program that you can do at home, based on your needs. Yoga and tai chi emphasize range of motion and offer postures and movements that work to expand the chest and emphasize proper alignment.

For a full reference list contact wellness@luther.edu
Chickpeas Simmered in Masala Sauce

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 cup finely chopped onion
3/4 teaspoon ground coriander
1/3 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 cup finely chopped tomatoes
1 cup water
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
2 1/2 cups cooked, drained chickpeas
1/2 teaspoon garam masala
1 teaspoon lemon juice

1. In a frying pan over medium heat, heat the olive oil, then add in the cumin seeds. Give them a stir and let them toast for about 10 seconds. Add in the onions, stir them and fry until they begin to turn brown at the edges.

2. Add the ginger, coriander, cayenne, and turmeric and give the spices a quick stir to combine them all with the onion. Then add in the tomatoes, water and salt. Stir to combine everything and bring the mixture to a boil. Cover the pan, turn the heat to low, and let the mixture simmer for 10 minutes.

3. Add in the chickpeas and bring the mixture back up to a boil. Then turn the heat back down to low, cover and let simmer for 15 minutes. Add the garam masala and lemon juice, stir it in, and let it all cook uncovered for another 5 minutes or so.

4. You can enjoy this dish on its own or serve it over a bed of steamed rice.

Employee Spotlight
Hongmei Yu
Associate Professor of Chinese

Professor Yu honestly admitted that she doesn’t really pay that much attention to her posture throughout the day, but during her non-work hours she tries to stay as active as she can to keep her body free of tension and pain. Her favorite activities are going to the Luther swimming pool and taking a simple walk around Decorah. Professor Yu is also a big fan of yoga and once or twice a week she goes to the fitness studio Reefuel where she especially enjoys doing hot yoga. Her other unique way of keeping herself moving is having 3 cats which always keep “distracting her from working too much and making sure that their needs are satisfied”.

One Move Wonder
Check out this Exercise

Standing Calf Raises: Stand on the edge of a step with your abs pulled in, the balls of your feet firmly planted on the step, and heels hanging over the edge. You can hold onto a wall or railing to stabilize yourself. Raise your heels a few inches above the edge of the step so that you’re on your tiptoes. Hold the position for a moment, and then lower your heels below the platform, feeling a stretch in your calf muscles.