

HINDMARSH AND FITZROY PHYSIOTHERAPY

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HOW TO AVOID BECOMING A HUNCHBACK

So you don't want a Dowagers Hump?

This hunchback is called a "kyphosis" and just because your mum, dad or grandparent had one does not mean you need to follow suit.

Kyphosis is a deviation of the slight S-shape into a more dramatic curve that causes a rounded upper back. It is an unnatural curve that can effect portions of the spine or the entire spine. The back rounds and the head and neck shift forward

WHAT CAN CAUSE KYPHOSIS

BAD POSTURE- EG

Mobile Phones, Tablets, and Computers

Bad posture can loosen the ligaments in the spine. Over time this loosening can cause the spine to curve unnaturally and a rounded upper back. For the first time in history, we are purposely sitting in poor postures for extended periods of time.

Long hours in front of a computer or sitting at a desk force the spinal column out of its normal gentle curves into an ugly stoop.

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- Not only do you appear older, you sag with the pain in the neck, back or shoulders.
- Your spine and bones are thrown out of alignment, causing more stress
- Your joints rub against each other wrongly, wearing out and leading to arthritis
- Your stretched or tightened shoulder and chest muscles burn or ache
- Your joint ligaments are stressed and weakened, depriving joints of support
- Your muscles don't work properly because the joints aren't in right position, so you spend more energy on your activities, getting tired more easily
- Neck and back pain force your posture to change - for the worse - leading to other pains and aches in your joints.
- Muscles now working in a shortened position can become tight.

OSTEOPOROSIS AND WEAK BONES

Nutrient weak diets, increases in average weight, smoking, and less time for exercise has led to higher rates of osteoporosis in a younger generation and more severe damage in the aging population. Osteoporosis causes a weakening and compression of the bones in the spine.

TRAUMA AND INJURY

Blunt force trauma, and damage to the ligaments, muscle, or bone in the spine is an additional cause of Kyphosis. The spine may heal improperly leading to further damage.



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HOW TO HELP PREVENT KYPHOSIS

Learn to stop hurting yourself while you're working.

Become aware of the harm you're causing to your body. Use one minute to focus on how you're sitting. Visualise the stress placed on your ligaments and joints by the forward head position, stooped shoulders and rounded back.

Awareness is half the battle. Repeat this simple exercise once every hour to unconsciously straighten your shoulders, lift your head and expand your chest.

POSTURE IS THE LARGEST CONTRIBUTING FACTOR TO UNNATURAL CURVING OF THE SPINE.

SITTING

When your knees are higher than your hips, it's very hard to sit up straight.

When your knees higher than your hips it tilts your pelvis back, flattens your lower back. By flattening that nice little arch that once existed in the back, the rest of the back wants to fall forward and then the head follows.

Look at where your knees are relative to your hips. Ideally your knees should drop slightly down below the height of your hips. That allows the pelvis forward. If your seat is low, fold a towel and place it underneath the seat bones.

Additionally a small rolled towel in the small of your back will help maintain the curve and in doing so limit your forward head posture.

If you are in a different situation make a concerted effort to control your spine.

Most people watch tv, surf the net, and play games on their smart phone or tablet in a hunched over position. This can cause neck pain, stiffness, and long-term damage. Next time you are using a device try to keep it in a more forward-looking position or try putting it on a stand. Avoid the combination of slouching over phone or computer while watching tv in poor posture. It's a double whammy of rounded spine on couch and forward head posture to look up to see TV. We are a double screen generation !!

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When sitting at a computer, position your monitor so the middle of the screen is at eye level and sit with your feet flat on the floor, legs uncrossed. Also ensure that your keyboard is placed at waist height to allow your elbows to rest near your body at a 90 degree angle.

STANDING

Something as simple as the way you stand can effect the long-term health of your spine. When standing, keep shoulders and back aligned, engaging stomach muscles to ensure proper alignment. If you need to bend over due to your chosen profession, use ergonomic aids to improve body position. Proper table and chair height can improve function

SLEEPING ADVICE

If you're a back sleeper, try to minimize your pillows as much as possible, so that you have the support just in the small of your neck. Use the smallest pillow you can under your head and still support your neck. Pillows should not be underneath your shoulders.

If you're a side sleeper, however, then you are going to want to have a pillow that allows you to fill in the space between your shoulder and your neck. A pillow that is little bit flatter in this situation works, and the other pillow can be used between your knees and ankles. You want your chin to line up in the middle of your breastbone.

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MOST IMPORTANT IS EXERCISE

Consider adding back extension and strengthening exercises to your regimen. Get a posture analysis and some tips on how to straighten and strengthen your back through exercise and awareness.

Additionally try to build your core- not with curls that will reinforce the flexed spine position but Pilates and stabilising exercises in functional positions.

Speak with our physios or your personal trainer at the gym.

And finally, really check your workspace and work habits. That's where we spend the most time. Make sure to get up, stretch, or walk about once an hour. Following these simple tips can go a long way in preventing the hunchback from developing.

Exercise for bone health too.

Not all exercise is created equal when it comes to building bone strength.

Weight bearing exercises are key to healthy bones long term. However, weight bearing does not mean having to do heavy lifting. Exercises such as yoga and pilates leverage weight bearing techniques using your own body weight. This is ideal because it is easy on your body's joints while using enough of your own body weight to stimulating bone regrowth. Water aerobics is a great choice for those who already struggle with deteriorating bone diseases such as osteoporosis.



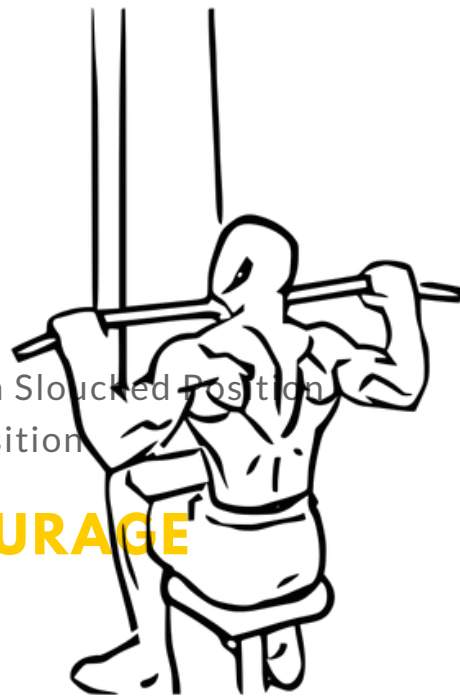
TRY REDUCING SMOKING, SODIUM, PROTEIN, & CAFFEINE

Smoking, over consumption of caffeine, too much protein, and high levels of sodium are by far four of the most damaging things to your bones.

Protein is needed for energy and many other important functions in the body. However, overconsumption produces higher levels of sulfates. Sulfate in turn increase the amount of calcium the body excretes, lowering absorption.

EXERCISES TO AVOID

- Ones that cause you to poke your head forward
- With correct form they can be ok- just have a trainer or physio check your form
- The kyphosis exercises to avoid are:
 - Crunches
 - Chest Fly
 - Chest Press
 - Knee Extensions
 - Lat Pull Downs (Behind the Head)
 - Seated Rows
 - Toe Touch with a Twist
 - Hamstring Stretches
 - Back Stretches
 - Cardiovascular Exercises That Put You in a Slouched Position
 - Yoga Poses That Put You in a Slouched Position



SOME EXERCISES TO ENCOURAGE

- Chin Tuck or neck retraction
- Shoulder retraction
- Anterior shoulder stretch
- Chest Stretches
- Angel exercise

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PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN.. ?



Our experienced physiotherapists can assist in helping you maintain the mobility and strength through your spine. We can do a detailed postural analysis and provide a program to help prevent Kyphotic postures.

Call us on 8346 2000 or 8342 2233

OTHER RESOURCES



We are passionate about providing our patients and community with information on prevention and management

We have put together a comprehensive free e-Book guide to understanding and managing Back pain, We explain the causes and contributing factors, useful advice and tips on self management, signs and symptoms.

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