Physical Therapy and Your Health

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THE DO'S AND THE DON'TS OF OFFICE POSTURE

Studies have shown that men and women who sit for hours at a time are among those most likely to experience significant episodes of back and neck pain. By correcting their postural habits, many of these people could significantly reduce their chances of having this pain. Fortunately, the main factors affecting posture and ergonomics are within one's ability to control.

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FACTS ABOUT POSTURE

➢ Pressure between discs in the spine increases significantly as the spine flexes forward, commonly referred to as "slouching".
➢ As muscles fatigue, slouching becomes more likely. This puts added pressure on the neck and back.
➢ Over time, poor postural habits can lead to loss of mobility within the spine.
➢ Poor posture can contribute to referred pain in many areas of the body including the legs and arms.
➢ Muscle weakness or atrophy can be caused by poor posture.
➢ A natural tendency when experiencing back pain is to limit motion in order to avoid producing the pain associated with the movement, A.K.A. "over-protecting" your posture. This can be harmful because the spine is designed to move and limiting motion can lead to permanent loss of spinal flexibility.

POSTURE TIPS

➢ Get up and move
   A quick walk to the copier or water cooler can be enough to limit postural strain caused by prolonged sitting.
➢ Use a lumbar roll
   Ergonomic aids like this will help keep your spine in its natural position. *To insure proper use of the lumbar roll, consult your physical therapist.*
➢ Exercise regularly
   Aerobic exercise and strength training, especially "pulling" exercises, can go a long way in strengthening postural muscles.
➢ Sit up straight and align the head, shoulders and hips in a vertical line.
   Avoid unbalanced postures, such as crossing your legs, leaning to one side and tilting your head.

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