WEEK 2

Postures

WEEK 2



Ning: Poise with serenity is expressed as a heart at home beneath a roof.

WEEK 2

Graceful Postures



The Chinese symbol for "tranquility" evokes feelings of balance – poise.

Graceful postures become more available to us when we are able to experience and enjoy feelings of tranquility.

A truly graceful posture is defined by how we hold ourselves when we think no one is looking. There are two types of graceful postures.

- **Mental:** How we see the world and think about ourselves in our own thoughts
- **Physical:** How we sit, stand or walk when we are not thinking about sitting, standing or walking.

WEEK 2

The Posture of the Body



Shakespeare was one of the first to use the word “posture” to refer to the way a person holds and positions their body.

Coriolanus, also known as Gnaeus Marcius Coriolanus, was a legendary Roman general from the 5th century BC.

Coriolanus's story has inspired various works, including Shakespeare's tragedy “Coriolanus,” which explores themes of power, conflict, and personal identity. His life reflects the struggles of early Rome, including class tensions and the challenges of leadership.

WEEK 2

The Posture of the Body

As Shakespeare wrote of Coriolanus:

> *"As if that whatsoever god who leads him*
> *Were slily crept into his human powers*
> *And gave him graceful posture."*
>
> — Junius Brutus

We often say of determined people that they have a "strong spine."

WEEK 2

Poise and the Spine

The journey toward greater physical poise begins with the spine.

– Dr. Bill Thomas

"If you seek health, look first to the spine."

– Socrates

"You are as young as your spine is flexible."

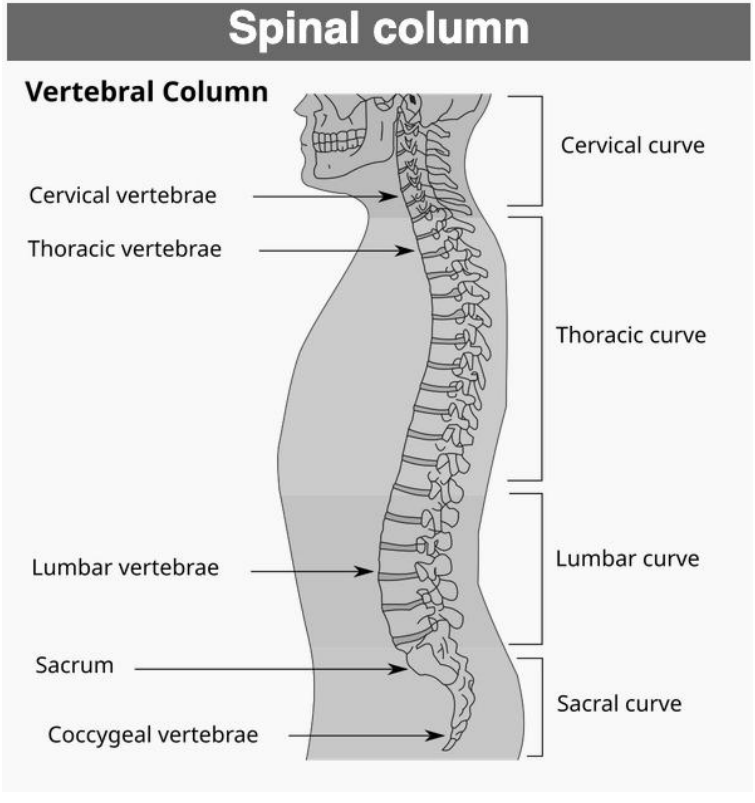
– Roger Hittleman

"Purpose is a soft virtue but it's what gives you steel in your spine"

– Richard Karlgaard

WEEK 2

Spinal Anatomy



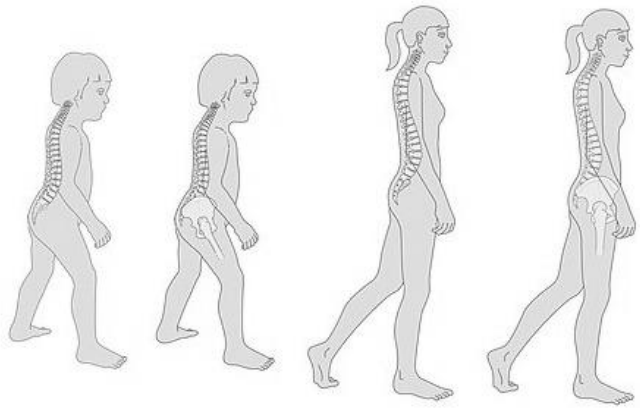
The human spinal column, also known as the spine or vertebral column, consists of 33 vertebrae stacked in a column, which includes 24 movable vertebrae and additional fused vertebrae forming the sacrum and coccyx. It serves to support the body, protect the spinal cord, and allow for flexibility and movement.

Basic Spinal Anatomy:

- Cervical spine (neck): 7 vertebrae (C1–C7)
- Thoracic spine (chest/upper back): 12 vertebrae (T1–T12)
- Lumbar spine (lower back): 5 vertebrae (L1–L5)
- Sacrum (pelvis region): 5 (fused) vertebrae (S1–S5)
- Coccyx (tailbone): 4 (3–5, fused) vertebrae

WEEK 2

Usual Curvatures of the Spine



Because we walk on two legs, the human vertebral column is curved in several places. These curves increase our spine's strength, flexibility, and ability to absorb the weight of our bodies. They change as we age.

- The upper cervical spine has a convex curve. This is the least visible of the spinal curves. A convex curve is known as a lordotic curve.
- The thoracic curve is concave forward and begins at the middle of the second and ends at the middle of the twelfth thoracic vertebra. This curve is known as a kyphotic curve.
- The lumbar curve is more marked in the female than in the male and is convex anteriorly, the convexity of the lower three vertebrae being much greater than that of the upper two. This curve is a lordotic curve.
- The sacral curve begins at the sacrovertebral articulation, and ends at the point of the coccyx; its concavity is directed downward and forward as a kyphotic curve.

WEEK 2

Unusual Curvatures of the Spine

As we age some people develop different types of spinal curvature.

- **Forward Head Posture** occurs when changes in the spine result in our ears moving ahead of our shoulders.
- **Kyphosis** is an exaggerated kyphotic curvature of the thoracic region. This produces the so-called “humpback” or “dowager's hump”, a condition commonly resulting from osteoporosis.
- **Lordosis** is an exaggerated lordotic curvature of the lumbar region. This is sometimes called “swayback.” Temporary lordosis is common during pregnancy.
- **Scoliosis** is a lateral spinal curvature that occurs in 0.5% of the population. It is more common among females and may result from unequal growth of the two sides of one or more vertebrae.
- **Kyphoscoliosis,** a combination of kyphosis and scoliosis.

The curvatures most relevant to older people are:

- Forward Head Posture – FHP
- Kyphosis

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Forward Head Posture

Forward head posture (FHP) is a common condition characterized by the head being positioned forward of the shoulders, often accompanied by a protruding chin. This misalignment can lead to various complications, particularly neck pain, especially in adults.



Causes of Forward Head Posture

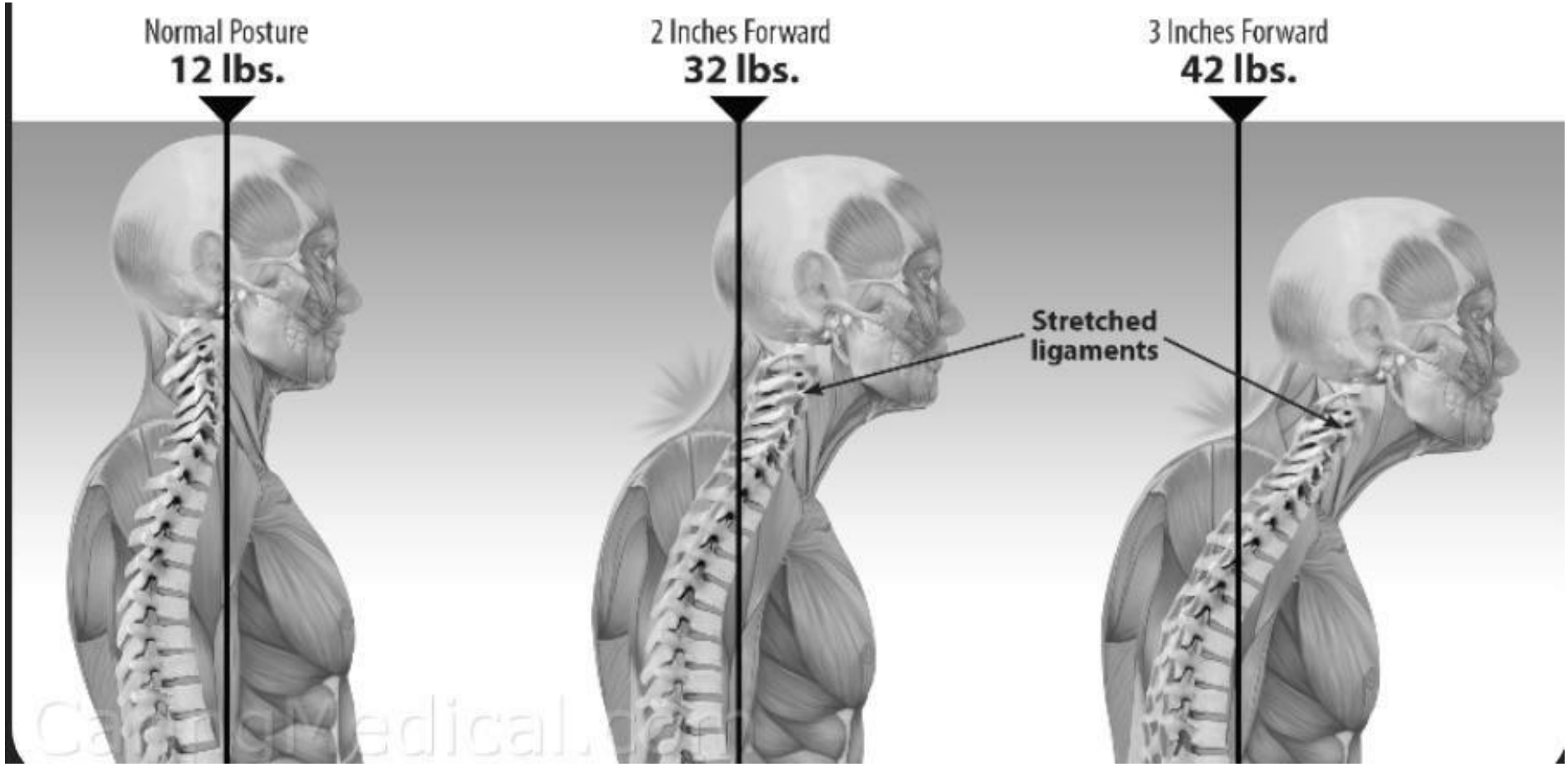
- **Prolonged Screen Time:** Extended use of computers, smartphones, and tablets contributes significantly to this posture.
- **Poor Posture:** Due to a sedentary lifestyle.

Over time, certain neck and upper back muscles become weak while others become tight, leading to further postural issues.

Ageist stereotypes suggest that FHP is caused by aging but this is not true. The condition occurs in young and old alike.

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PHP Physics



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FHP: Symptoms and Correction

Forward head posture may result in:

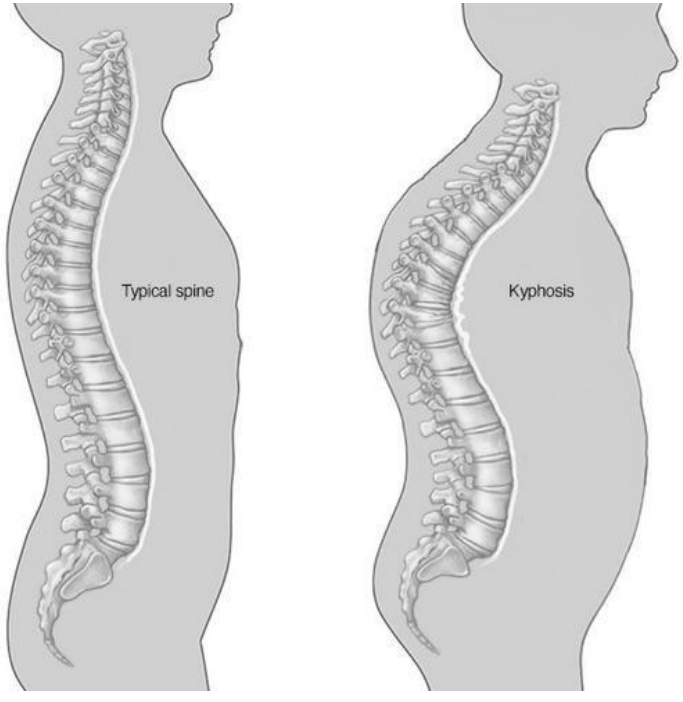
- **Neck Pain:** A common symptom linked to the strain on neck muscles.
- **Muscle Imbalances:** Weakness in deep cervical flexors and tightness in suboccipital muscles.
- **Headaches:** Tension headaches can arise from muscle strain.
- **Reduced Mobility:** Limited range of motion in the neck and upper back.

Simple Exercises can correct most cases of FHP

- **Suboccipital Release:** Use a rolled towel or tennis balls to relieve tension at the base of the skull.
- **Thoracic Foam Rolling:** Helps restore mobility in the upper back.
- **Cervical Lateral Flexion Stretch:** Stretches the neck muscles to alleviate tightness.

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Kyphosis



Postural kyphosis is the most common type of kyphosis and can occur in both the old and the young. In the young, it is reversible by correcting muscular imbalances.

The term ‘dowager's hump’ originated in the 1920s and refers to an increased curvature of the upper back commonly associated with older women, known as dowagers. The name reflects the posture changes that can occur in older women.

In fact, kyphosis can also occur in older men as well as in younger men and women.

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Kyphosis

Mild kyphosis may not cause any noticeable symptoms. It is typical for the upper back to have a slight curve. However, too much curvature can lead to back pain and difficulty standing upright.

Kyphosis is often responsible for “losing height” as we age.

The condition is most often the result of changes in the muscles and ligaments surrounding the spine.

Osteoporosis can further complicate spinal curvature and especially in older women.

Kyphosis can result in:

- Pain or stiffness in the back or shoulder blades
- Tight hamstring muscles
- Difference in shoulder blade height

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Types of Kyphosis

- **Postural kyphosis –** This is the result of poor posture, most common in adolescents and young adults. It can be corrected with proper posture and exercise.
- **Scheuermann's kyphosis –** This often occurs when the front of the spine doesn't grow as fast as the back of the spine during growth spurts such as puberty. It can be treated with stretching and anti-inflammatory medication.
- **Congenital kyphosis –** This birth defect occurs when a baby's spinal column doesn't develop properly in the womb. Treatment may focus on preventing further curving of the spine.

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Postural Kyphosis Corrections

Exercise	Description	Benefits
Standing Wall Stretch	Stand against a wall and press your arms and head into it.	Enhances spinal stretch, improves posture.
Thoracic Extension on a Chair	Sit on the edge of a chair and lean back over the backrest.	Increases thoracic mobility, reduces kyphotic curve.
Scapular Retractions	Pull shoulder blades together and downward.	Strengthens thoracic spine muscles, improves alignment.

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General Posture Pointers

1. Find your starting point:

- Stand with your back against a wall, ensuring that your heels, buttocks, shoulder blades, and the back of your head touch the wall.
- Practice maintaining this position for a few minutes each day to train your muscles and reinforce the habit of good posture.
- This exercise helps you become aware of your body alignment and correct any deviations from proper posture.
- If your body feels different from the usual you may be able to create better alignment using simple insights and exercises.

2. Sit or Stand Tall with confidence and with your:

- Head held high,
- Shoulders relaxed, and
- Spine aligned.

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More General Posture Pointers

3. Shoulder Roll Exercises enhance poise:

- Start by sitting or standing comfortably.
- Slowly roll your shoulders forward in a circular motion, then reverse the direction.
- Repeat this exercise several times, focusing on relaxing your shoulder muscles and improving their flexibility.
- This exercise helps release any stiffness and encourages a more open and poised posture.

4. Core Strengthening Exercises:

- A strong core provides a stable foundation for enhancing poise.
- Strengthening your core helps support your spine, preventing slouching and promoting an upright posture.

WEEK 2

The Posture of the Mind

Moving from apathy to enthusiasm

WEEK 2

Apathy

Apathy is a lack of feeling, emotion, interest, and/or concern about something. It is a state of indifference, and/or the suppression of emotions such as concern, excitement, motivation, or passion. An apathetic individual has an absence of interest in or concern about emotional, social, spiritual, philosophical, virtual, or physical life and the world.

The apathetic may lack a sense of purpose, worth, or meaning in their life.

People with severe apathy tend to have a lower quality of life and are at a higher risk for mortality and early institutionalization.

In positive psychology, apathy is described as a result of the individuals' feeling, they do not possess the level of skill required to confront a challenge. It may also be a result of perceiving no challenge at all (e.g., the challenge is irrelevant to them, or conversely, they have learned helplessness).

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Enthusiasm

The word enthusiasm originates from Greek and means ‘inspired or possessed by [a] god’.

- Socrates taught that the inspiration of poets is a form of enthusiasm.
- The term was originally confined to a belief in religious inspiration, or to intense religious fervor or emotion.

Enthusiasm is not just a feeling; it has significant health benefits that can enhance both mental and physical well-being.

Positive Health Outcomes

- **Reduced Risk of Heart Disease:** Studies indicate that a positive affect, which includes feelings of enthusiasm, is associated with a lower likelihood of developing heart disease.
- **Improved Overall Well-Being:** Engaging in activities that inspire enthusiasm can lead to greater happiness and contentment, contributing to better mental health.