**Straight Talk About Posture**

 In a world of quick fixes that over promise and underdeliver, here’s one that can truly impact overall health while helping you to instantly look taller, and leaner in the process- good posture.

 Do you often find yourself slouching at your desk, hunched over your smartphone, or sinking into the couch for a Netflix marathon? If the answer is yes, you’re not alone. Many of us have developed poor posture habits in our modern, tech-driven world. However, the good news is that something as simple as a shift in posture can lead to numerous physical and mental health benefits that reach far beyond what your mom may have realized when she told you to stand up straight.

 There are some compelling reasons why being mindful of posture should become a priority that reaches far beyond doing so for appearances sake. Good posture is about maintaining the natural alignment of the spine and body while standing, sitting, or moving. Proper posture allows muscles, joints, and ligaments to function optimally, reducing the risk of musculoskeletal issues and injuries. But don’t take my word for it. I’ve consulted with two local experts, Dr. Antonio D’Aria, DO of LiVella Care, Branford, and Dr. Paul Heeren, DC, of Heeren Family Chiropractic, Guilford, to get their take on the topic. It seems this one simple fix can help with everything from pain prevention, improved breathing and enhanced digestion to boosted confidence and better mood.

 “Good posture takes the strain off of joints and muscles, and improves lung capacity” states Dr. D’Aria, “it helps us to see the world with a level head and, with better posture, we just feel better overall.” Embracing the power of good posture can reduce pain, enhance mood, and as Doctor D’aria pointed out, boost overall well-being. The mind-body connection is powerful. Standing or sitting tall is a great way to tap into that connection. If you’ve been slumping and slouching more than not, make a conscious effort to stand tall, walk confidently, and sit comfortably. What’s simple isn’t always easy and takes practice, but when you catch yourself and make the shift, you’ll feel the difference immediately.

 “Forward head posture or ‘text head’, Dr. Heeron advises”, is a habit many of us have fallen into, which can lead to significant health problems such as degenerative arthritis, nerve interference, muscle strain and a host of other issues. When you consider that the head weighs 10-15 lbs and an additional 10-15 lbs for every inch the head bows forward, we can literally be adding an additional 40 lbs of strain on a daily basis.” If you were to do a posture check right now, you would notice the difference as soon as you made the adjustment. With shoulders back you’ll feel your chest open up making room for optimal breathing. As you elongate the torso, you’ll gain a longer silhouette and ease digestion. Hold your head high for an instant boost of self esteem while sending a message of confidence. Posture and body language are popular tools used in psychology. Think Superman stance. Research has shown that maintaining good posture can improve your emotional state, as well as boost productivity and improve concentration.

 Oftentimes we don’t know what we don’t know, but when we do, change is possible by taking this newfound awareness to make improvements. Knowledge is power, so now that you know how powerful correct posture can be, you can use what you’ve learned every day, in just about any situation, including mealtime. It’s true! The foods you eat can have a significant impact on posture by providing the nutrients and building blocks needed for healthy muscles, bones, and joints. (\*See sample recipe below.)

 As we move into the holiday season, you may want to apply the principles of good posture to confidently navigate festive gatherings, keep health in check and avoid those extra pounds that are often considered to be inevitable. Just as maintaining good posture leads to a more confident and healthier you, applying these principles when walking into a social gathering can help you feel confident and enjoy the festivities while making mindful choices. Take a stand to be kind to yourself, indulge in your favorite treats without guilt, and balance your plate with healthy choices. The key is to get back on track with the very next meal. By combining the physical and mental aspects of posture with mindful eating, you can make the most of this holiday season with more joy, confidence, and grace.

 *\*This flavor packed recipe, Grilled Salmon with Quinoa and Roasted Vegetables provides a nutritious, ‘good posture’ punch. It’s rich in nutrients like protein & omega-3 fatty acids from the salmon, fiber and protein from the quinoa, and a variety of vitamins and minerals from the roasted vegetables. By promoting strong bones and muscles, these wonderful nutrients can support good posture and overall health while making your tastebuds happy! To receive a copy, reach out at joann@wellnessfusion.net.*

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