



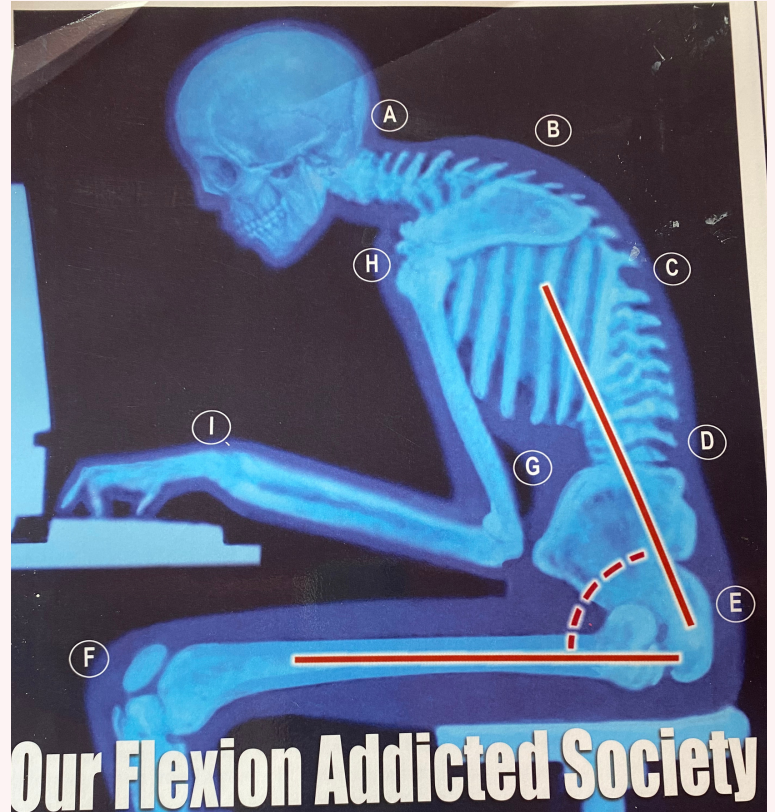
Newsletter March 2023

Amenia Yoga – a Place for Wellness

The cozy little studio with a big heart

There is more than meets the eye when it comes to poor posture. Rounded shoulders, pot belly, tech neck, misaligned pelvis, sway back, and leg misalignment are the visible signs.

It may seem surprising at first, but poor posture can directly lead to common spinal problems like disc degeneration, arthritis, sciatica, and bulging and herniated discs. When the muscles around our spine are tight, compression occurs. Often, these conditions are considered unavoidable, but we weren't born this way, and mostly these visible signs are due to how we walk, sit and stand; they are functional, not structural. Unfortunately, how we use our bodies is so ingrained in our brains that these misalignments feel comfortable and have become the default.



For example, in 2007, a study in Australia with over 800 teenagers found that computer use was associated with forward head posture. This tech-neck posture became so deeply ingrained even when these teens weren't at the computer. Unfortunately, this forward head posture is sometimes seen in younger elementary school-age children.

Our brain notices when we tend to be in a posture for long periods, and because it's so efficient, it does what it can to keep us in it; therefore, our muscles stay contracted and chronically tight. Then, as our body adjusts and compensates, this unnatural position feels more and more comfortable.

In this forward head posture, all the muscles responsible for tilting the head down become contracted. Since the head weighs about 11 or 12 pounds, the center of gravity changes, and the back muscles come into play to prevent falling over. This misalignment causes our bodies to compensate with sway backs, more profound curves, or even contracted abdominal muscles that cause a flat back.



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Misalignment creates physical stress on joints and ligaments, leading to stress and inflammation that, in turn, increase cortisol levels in our bodies. Cortisol is the hormone identified with our fight or flight response, and it's kept us going for thousands of years, so we need it, but the trouble arises when it's in continuous circulation. It's associated with bone loss, suppressed immune system, headaches, poor digestion, increased BP, etc.

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Other symptoms of poor posture sneak up on us, making us think they're unrelated. But, it's these that wreak havoc on our health.

Slouching creates excess pressure on the thoracic cavity leading to high BP and digestive issues – the compression makes digestion and elimination more difficult. Instead of checking off digestive problems to aging, they often correlate with poor posture. Slouching also causes shallow breathing (try it), making it difficult for the diaphragm to press down. This breathing also signals panic and anxiety that release cortisol.

Correcting poor posture is more than pulling the shoulders back and standing tall; it's also about **fascia**, strengthening **back extensor muscles**, **pandiculation** (releasing tight muscles), and **lengthening** from within, from the pelvic floor to the crown. Yoga is great for all four!

Fascia is like a web or a sheath that covers everything in our body, from our head to our fingers and toes. Like a cocoon, it snuggles over 70 trillion different types of cells in our body and keeps them in place. It connects everything! In all its various forms, this connective tissue weaves in and out of all our cells, organs, muscles, and even every muscle spindle. Healthy fascia is viscous, smooth, and slippery, allowing for movement, but it's also strong and provides structure and stability. Fascia needs movement to stay healthy. When our bodies don't move, often due to our sedentary lifestyle, the fascia becomes tight, further restricting the mobility of our muscles, joints, and ligaments, causing painful health conditions. We can improve how fascia functions; fascial health depends on staying hydrated, gentle movements, and pandiculation.

Because of our movement patterns, some of our muscles aren't fully activated. This is especially true of **back extensor muscles**. However, we can do several yoga poses and Pilates exercises to strengthen them and bring them into action to improve posture.



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Using our example of the kyphotic spine, when our brain and nervous system keep these muscles contracted and fascia tight, we need to retrain our brain to create new neural pathways.

Pandiculation is the way to do it; it's different from passive stretching. Perfect examples of pandiculation are when animals rouse from sleep – they voluntarily lengthen, tighten muscles, then slowly release and go off to play. We also do this in the mornings before we get up; it's like a warm-up before getting out of bed. Pandiculation is a pain-relief secret used in somatics to release chronically tight muscles.

The other way we can begin to correct posture is to create space by **lengthening from our pelvic floor to our crown**. This takes practice, but the goal is to create space from within using breath. When we practice creating space, we notice movement patterns changing over time. This space is great for bones and nerves, and these lengthening movements also improve the function of the fascia.

It's important to notice our movements in daily life, not just a few times a week in a yoga class or at the gym. Our posture may seem set in stone, but it's not; being consciously aware of how we sit, walk, use the computer, and do daily chores is the first step to a lifelong change.

We have a new evening class starting next Tuesday, March 7, at 5:30 pm! ***Slow & Steady***

It's a class geared toward those seeking a well-rounded practice; it focuses on fundamental yoga poses.

We respect the energy levels of late afternoon/early evening, and we'll move the body to wind down for a relaxing evening ahead. Emphasis is on proper alignment and safety in poses and transitions between them. The class is excellent for people new to yoga or those who have been practicing but want to go deeper and learn how to work with the breath and movement to understand their effects on the body. Each class ends with relaxation, a breathing practice, and sound bowls.

I hope you enjoyed this newsletter.

anatomytrains.com How Fascia Moves,

somaticmovementcenter.com

bonecoach.com/ mobility, core strength and your bones

Body by Science, Doug McGruiff, MD and John Little, 2009

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