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CORRECT HEAD POSTURE POSITION MAKES FOR A HEALTHY NECK AND BACK

Have you ever seen an older person who seems to carry his head way out in front of his upper torso? If you look at him from the side, the head may appear to be 2 inches or more in front of his body. You may even see a pronounced hump where the back of his neck meets the top of the shoulders. This is known as forward head posture (FHP) and hyperkyphotic posture. (Kyphotic means hunchback.)

In the case of this older person, it is likely that this condition began to develop many years before. For whatever reason, maybe simply due to bad posture, the person's head began to move forward from the perfect balance position directly in the center of the shoulders. Somewhere along the way, any number of problems can begin to develop as a result.

For every inch forward from center the head moves, it adds an additional 10 pounds of weight that must be dealt with by the muscles of the upper back and the neck. These muscles now must work harder to keep the head and the chin from dropping forward on the person's chest. Consequently, these muscles must remain in constant contraction which puts additional pressure on the nerves at the back of the neck. The result can be the development of headaches at the base of the skull. For some, these can even mimic a sinus headache.

A chiropractor is the person to see in order to get this condition corrected. It is important to do this long before a person gets into their later years and the condition becomes difficult to deal with. A chiropractor will assess and deal with any subluxations (minor dislocations of the vertebrae) in the area. Additionally, work will be done to re-invigorate muscles the body uses to retract the head.

A new patient visiting a chiropractor may have a 2 inch forward (anterior) head placement. This forward head posture may or may not be very noticeable to the patient. This person probably has gotten rather accustomed to carrying the equivalent of a 20 pound watermelon around his neck. If this FHP is not handled in a series of visits to a chiropractor, the patient's condition will continue to decline over the years.

One study points out how important it is to get this condition handled before old-age sets in. The Rancho Bernard Study was done with 1,353 participants who suffered from osteoporosis. The amount of FHP was measured in each participant. First off, it was noted that a higher percentage of men than women suffered from the condition. Of them, 44 percent of the men and only 22 percent of the women had FHP. It was also noted during the study that persons with FHP had a 1.44 times greater rate of mortality than those who did not suffer from this condition.

A person who suffers from frequent headaches, back of neck pain or tightness in the upper back area would be wise to have their posture checked to see where they carry their head in relation to their torso. If it seems like an FHP condition might exist, a trip to a chiropractor's office would be a wise decision. A chiropractor can put the patient on the road to better posture, pain free living, and in the case of FHP, possibly a longer life.

Source: Chiro.org. "What is Forward Head Posture?" http://www.chiro.org/LINKS/Forward_Head_Posture.shtml and "Hyperkyphotic Posture Predicts Mortality in Older Community-dwelling Men and Woman: A Prospective Study." October 2004.
http://www.chiro.org/LINKS/ABSTRACTS/Hyperkyphotic_Posture_Predicts_Mortality.shtml