

## Summer Health Update 2010

### What's New:

1. What a Pain in the Neck!
2. You Really Are What You Eat
3. How to Have Happy Feet

### What a Pain in the Neck!

There is a reason why we commonly refer to a difficult person as a “pain in the neck.” A pain in the neck is really annoying! As uncomfortable as pain can be there are other neck related symptoms that are equally disconcerting such as radiating pain, weakness or numbness into the arms.

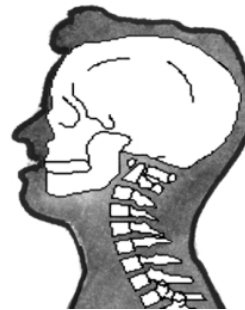
Many of the neck problems people suffer from these days are related to chronic poor posture habits. The use of computers and hand held data devices, cell phones, and video game consoles has lead to the epidemic of a neck and upper back deformity called forward head posture.

To understand how your posture predictably affects you and the structures of your neck, you will need to get familiar with the normal shape of the spine and its parts. In columns A and B to the right there are three graphics in each column. **Column A** shows *normal* structure and **column B** shows *abnormal* structure. **Line 1** is drawings of the shape of the neck from the side view. **Line 2** is a similar x-ray view. **Line 3** is photographs of several segments from the side view of the neck at a midline cut.

Notice that the drawing in column B line 1 shows a reversed neck arch. Also notice that the x-ray in column B line 2 shows a loss of the neck arch and that the spinal bones (vertebrae) aren't so evenly spaced apart and symmetrical in shape as they are in the normal x-ray. In column B line 3 notice that the spaces between the vertebrae are collapsed, the discs are worn, and the spinal cord (object running down the middle) is being compressed by bony edges projecting out from the vertebrae.

A.

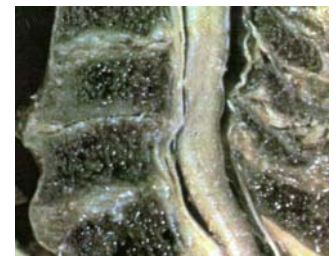
B.



1.



2.



3.

What causes this deformity and these degenerative changes? Often the cause is from chronic forward rounding of the neck and shoulders, which alters the weight distribution of the head on the upper spine. Normally only 1/3 of the weight of the head is carried on the front part of the vertebrae and discs, while the other 2/3's is carried by the joint “articular pillars” toward the back part of the vertebrae. When the head goes forward and the neck bends out of shape, much more weight is shifted onto the front of the vertebrae and discs—and the result is column B.

The symptoms often associated with the deformity and degenerative changes of forward head posture are joint stiffness, on-going muscle tension, upper extremity discomfort, and headaches, along with a “pain in the neck.” Treatment for this condition requires a holistic approach that corrects the poor posture habits, mobilizes the rigidity of the spine, stretches the tight connective tissues, and releases the muscle tension in the neck and shoulders area. If the condition progresses unchecked for too long, injections and/or surgery may become necessary—so keep your head on straight and be proactive!

## You Really Are What You Eat

You are not currently living with the same cells in your body that you were born with. Several years from now you will be composed of different cells than your body is made up of right now. This is all due to the fact that your body is in a constant state of cellular replacement.

You might be thinking that people should remain ageless if they get new cells all the time. However, it is nature’s way that 1) a cell can only reproduce a limited number of times, 2) the replacement cells get similar DNA coding to determine structure and function from the parent cells, and 3) the process of cell reproduction is imperfect so errors can occur down the line as we age.



Nevertheless, there are things we can do to either help or harm the delicate process of cellular replacement throughout our lives. Anything that disturbs the process of DNA synthesis degrades the quality of cell regeneration and includes things like smoking, drinking, exposure to

toxins/pollutants, and any lack of the essential macro or micro nutrients your body needs to regenerate normal cells.

Because we are in a constant state of regeneration on a cellular level, we need a constant supply of the basic building blocks of a human body in order to have the best chance at healthy cellular replacement. Of course, these building blocks come from food. What we eat gives us energy (calories) and gives us the raw materials for cell reproduction (nutrition).

Some of the best foods to eat in terms of nutrition come from the **Aggregate Nutrient Density Index (ANDI)** and the **Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC)** index. The ANDI scores food according to nutrients per calorie, and the ORAC scores food based on antioxidant activity.

High scoring ANDI foods include green leafy vegetables (collard greens, kale, watercress, Bok choy, spinach, Swiss chard), broccoli, radishes, cauliflower, cabbage, tomatoes, beans, red peppers and many berries, seeds, and nuts. High scoring ORAC foods also include beans, berries, nuts, figs raisins, dates, apples, pears, potatoes and avocados. Foods on both lists don’t have low fiber, processed sugars, cheap oils, fatty meats, refined grains, or high sodium. Those things shouldn’t be on your shopping list either if you want to build a healthy body.

## How to Have Happy Feet

New shoes look nice and can contribute to greater foot comfort and function. However, consider that your foot is *inside* the shoe but it is *on* the insole. Quite amazingly, even some very expensive shoes have inadequate insoles. That is like putting the tires from an inexpensive compact car on a Ferrari.



The picture above shows the difference between the stock insole from a new pair of Asics (white) and an upgraded Sof Sole Air® insole. The difference in feel and function is as great as the visual difference. Upgraded insoles are not very costly (\$25) and slip right in after you scrap the flimsy stock insoles.

The foot is made up of a lot of bones (26) and that means movement was intended, so I am not a fan of rigid foot support. I often treat patients with foot pains using ART (active release techniques) to free up rigid joints in the foot, so it seems that support with some freedom of movement is what’s needed to make your feet happy—and these insoles do that.

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