

YOUR CHILD'S POSTURE



*Lesson Material on Care of
the Preschool Child
No. 6*



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How can you compare your child's posture with the posture charts?

Children like to make shadow pictures on the wall. Some night before your child goes to bed have him make you a shadow picture of himself. He should stand naturally, with his eyes looking straight ahead and his side to the light. Compare his shadow with the posture chart and observe whether his standing position is excellent, good, poor, or bad.

Why do some children have poor posture?

Firm muscles keep our bodies straight and hold our organs in place. The muscles of the abdomen, diaphragm, neck, and back are all used in holding us erect. If these muscles weaken the shoulders sag, the diaphragm drops, the abdomen sags, the shoulder blades stick out, the back curves, and the child looks and is droopy.

Anything that causes muscles to lose their tone and relax may start a child standing in a relaxed position. Poor posture soon becomes a habit, so a child who begins to sit or stand wrongly needs to be watched carefully. Relaxed muscles are a sign that something is wrong. Overfatigue, undernourishment, exhausting illness, constant colds, or other infections can cause relaxation of muscles.

Has your child any specific posture defects?

Many people are slightly bowlegged or knock-kneed or carry one shoulder a little higher than the other. Some time when your child is undressed stand him with his back to you and study his figure to see whether he has any of these defects.

Bowlegs and knock-knees, which usually develop when a child is about a year old, could have been prevented in most cases if the child had had sun baths and cod-liver oil when he was a baby. If your child has bowlegs or knock-knees he should have shoes that will give him proper support. If the defect is very noticeable, he needs the attention of a physician.

If your child carries one shoulder high or has any other postural defect, notice what he does in work or play that may be increasing such defects and talk to your physician about special corrective exercises.

What should you do about your child's poor posture?

If your child is droopy find the causes. Talk to your physician about it.

See that nothing in his clothing interferes with free motion. Clothing should hang from the middle of the shoulders and should not bind anywhere.

Keep him happy, courageous, and proud of himself. This will help greatly to make him hold himself well. Have you ever noticed how a discouraged, worried, fearful person stands?

See that he gets plenty of rest and that his bed and pillows are arranged so that he can lie in a position that keeps his back flat.

Encourage him to do things that will help rather than hinder good posture. For example, if he likes to read or look at pictures, notice whether he slouches a long time in a chair, and suggest to him that he lie on his stomach on the floor for a change. Then show him later how to sit comfortably in a proper position and how to support his book.

Do you know how it feels to stand the right way?

Perhaps you can teach your child good posture more easily if you know more about how you yourself should stand. Try to do this: Stand with your heels about 4 inches out from a flat wall but with your head, shoulders, and the small of your back touching the wall. You now have your head erect, your back flat, and your abdomen drawn in. Can you keep that position and walk and move your arms, or are your muscles too weak and untrained? Try sitting in a straight-backed chair and keeping your back flat. Is that a natural position for you?

Problems.

1. What directions can you give to a child about sitting so that he will keep his back straight?
2. What do you think of the following suggestions to interest your child in standing well?
 - a. Have him compete with you to see which will learn to stand better.
 - b. Study with him in pictures the posture of athletes.
 - c. Have family games in which every one has to hold a good position for a few minutes or else pay a forfeit.
 - d. Remind him about standing and sitting straight when you have a good opportunity.
 - e. Start all the family taking posture exercises.

References.

Posture Standards (6 charts, 18 by 30 inches). To be purchased from the Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at 50 cents for the set of six or 25 cents for the three girls' charts or for the three boys' charts.

Posture Exercises. United States Children's Bureau Publication No. 165. Washington, 1926. (See reproductions of posture charts on pages 7-12.)

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