

Posture Perfect

by Craig Liebenson

It is hard to avoid the negative effects of sitting on our posture. Human beings are upright species, but you wouldn't know it from looking at workers leaving an office building at 5:00 P.M. all slumped forward. Ideal posture is vertical but as a result of prolonged, constrained sitting postures the following changes occur:

Figure 1: Slumped posture contributes to sternosymphyseal syndrome.



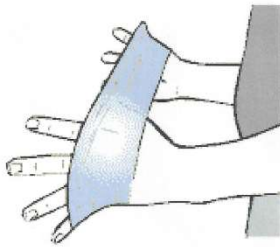
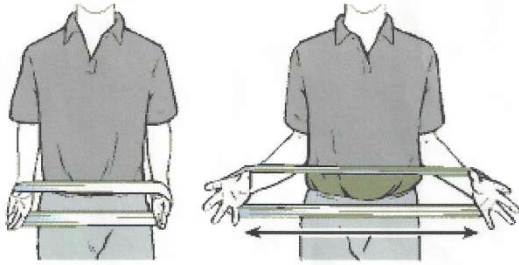
- Upper back round forward
- Shoulders become shrugged
- Head pushes forward
- Chin pokes
- Chest breathing predominates over belly breathing

Pr. Brügger's Solution to the Slumped Posture

Pr. Alois Brügger (1920-2001) a Swiss neurologist, realized that many ailments of the modern worker were secondary to poor posture. Headaches, TMJ pain, rotator cuff syndromes, carpal tunnel syndrome to name just a few. He developed a very simple exercise to activate the muscles weakened from sitting and simultaneously stretch those tightened by this posture.

Brügger's Postural Break with Resistance

Another excellent exercise is to add resistance to Brügger's postural break.



- Place your hands in a resistance band loop
- Stand up tall
- Lift your breastbone slightly
- Spread your fingers as far apart as possible
- Rotate your arms outwards (palms forward or turned out) while pushing your forearms out

This exercise can be performed twice a day. 8-10 slow repetitions are ideal.

These exercises will balance your muscles so that poor work posture does not become permanent. Unless you erase the effects of poor posture regularly it will be nearly impossible to prevent its effects from taking hold. These simple "micro-break" exercises can be utilized daily to help restore the upright posture which you were designed to have.

Brügger's Postural Break

While sitting in your chair follow these simple steps:



- Perch at the edge of your chair
- Turn your feet out slightly
- Have your feet be slightly farther apart than your hips
- Tuck your chin in slightly as if nodding "yes"
- Breathe into your tummy
- Slowly exhale actively by blowing the breath out through your lips while
- Rotating your arms outwards (palms forward or turned out)
- Spreading your fingers as far apart as possible
- Lifting your breastbone slightly

This can be performed once or twice for every 20-30 minutes of prolonged sitting.