

Blending the best of old and new methods for maximum health and wellness.

# Bridging the Gap

## *Head, and Shoulders, Knees and Toes, knees and toes...*

In this issue, we complete our 2006 Head-to-Toe theme. We started with articles for your feet and legs, then moved up to the low back and pelvis, and now we treat you to information to support health and wellness for your shoulders, neck, and head.

What each of us found as we began our articles for this issue, is that it is impossible to discuss healthy habits for your neck and shoulders without including your whole back and pelvis. So, read on, and enjoy a deeper understanding of how every part of your body is important to support the healthy whole.

## *Head and Shoulders Above the Rest...*

Allison Suran P.T. GCFP

The moment you were born, you engaged your most primitive reflex: the rooting-reflex. This coordinates the turning of your head, eyes, and mouth in search of food – your mother’s milk. At the earliest stages of development, the head, eyes, neck and trunk coordinate most of their rotation in the same direction. When my sons were young and learning to roll, I would take an enticing object and keep moving it so that they would want to watch it; turning their eyes, head, and eventually their whole body. Voila – they would roll over.

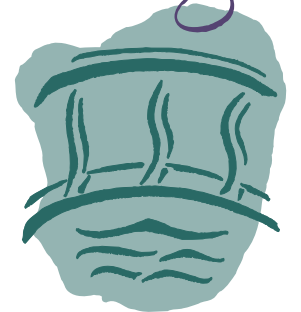
More sophisticated movement develops in later years. Differentiation, the ability to move our body parts in opposite directions, is necessary for mature motor development. However, with the evolution of our species from nomadic to agricultural, then industrial, to our current technologically advanced society, many movements of differentiation that would naturally develop are being limited by a singular, straight-ahead focus on the computer screen, TV, or even in the car.

Most children have enough play and athletic involvement to allow them to benefit from the development of healthy differentiated movements. However, the more focused we become on schoolwork or adult-work, the more we impose movement limitations on our bodies that can result in postural changes. This contributes to shoulder strains, neck pains, and headaches.

*Rather than replacing an "idea" of proper posture with a new picture of what posture is supposed to "look" like, healthy posture and movement is a physical inner feeling that, when discovered, can be transferred easily to any activity.*

Timely Tips  
From Your  
Physical Therapy  
Provider

## *Healing Bridge*



**PHYSICAL  
THERAPY**

*Cross the Bridge to Better  
Health & Wellness*

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404 NE Penn  
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# Upper Back, Neck or Shoulder Pain Often Related to the Low Back: Who Knew?

By: Nancy Hartung, BS, PTA

Physical therapists talk a lot about posture with patients because it is so important to maintain the curves of the spine in balanced positions. If poor postural alignment or body mechanics are a habit, neck pain, headaches, upper back pain and eventual shoulder and arm pain are sure to follow. Good posture will minimize and prevent back and neck pain and injury. If pain is already present, good posture will reduce and may even eliminate pain.

We know that understanding and using good posture is the key to preventing lots of problems. Humans have a beautifully engineered and balanced frame (musculoskeletal system) that provides for even distribution of load forces during weight bearing and activity. Our spines are made from 24 individually moving bones, called vertebrae. They are arranged in four zones: tailbone (sacrum), low-back (lumbar), mid-back (thoracic), and neck (cervical).

The cervical spine consists of the top seven vertebrae. This area of the spine is very flexible to allow for head rotation and visual perception.

The thoracic spine is the 12 vertebrae up the mid back. This area gives us trunk rotation, keeps us upright in standing/sitting and allows for forward and backward bending.

And now we come to the lumbar spine, which is where good posture actually begins. Try “slumping” your low back and curving your head forward and down, and feel what happens to your shoulders, neck and head. Avoiding this very common postural mistake can prevent injury and degenerative changes in the cervical spine, and even the shoulders. Most importantly you will feel better and move easier when you eliminate slumped posture.

But how do we avoid it? Gently put your low back into proper alignment with its slight forward lumbar curve. Once you feel your spine “pull-up” from the small of your back, gently bring your shoulders back and your head up tall.

Take a deep breathe and find your resting place in this position. This may take practice to feel normal or comfortable but keep at it, it will make a difference.

As your shoulders settle back, think about your neck and head; it is very important that your head is in alignment over your spine. To help visualize this, think about a golf ball resting on a tee, this is like your head resting on your neck and shoulders. If your head is jutting forward, it is teetering off the tee, putting great stress on the muscles, ligaments, connective tissue and bones. Heads weigh

approximately twelve pounds; think of hanging a ten pound bag of sugar from your neck...ouch!

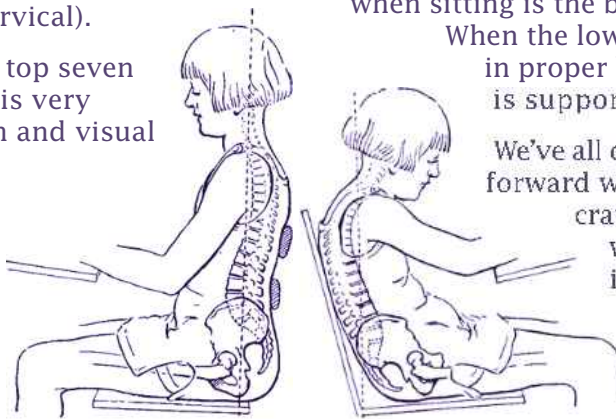
A slumped, forward head posture will even change the alignment of the shoulders. It creates poor joint mechanics that can cause impingement and compression in the shoulder with reaching activities which can contribute to rotator cuff problems and tendonitis. At Healing Bridge we always incorporate posture correction and strengthening when treating shoulder problems because the two are not separate issues. The same can be said for upper back pain and headache pain. Poor postural alignment is almost always a contributing factor.

Maintaining the neutral inward curve of the lumbar spine when sitting, standing, or working is the ideal posture. A low back cushion in the small of the back when sitting is the best way to support good posture.

When the low back is supported or maintained in proper balanced posture the whole spine is supported in better alignment.

We've all caught ourselves with heads jutting forward while driving, reading, computing, crafting, cooking, etc. Now you know what good posture feels like. That is the first step. Self-correcting frequently is the next step.

Posture correction isn't hard, it just takes practice. You can do it, and you're worth it!



## 10 Tips for Headache Relief:

1. Use good posture with proper chair support
2. Avoid “forward head” posture while working at the computer or driving.
3. Alleviate or minimize eye strain. (If you're needing to focus a lot, take mini eye-breaks by gazing into the distance to relax your eyes.
4. Drink lots of water to maintain good hydration
5. Avoid or minimize alcohol and caffeine intake
6. Let your jaw be “slack,” (avoid clenching teeth)
7. Stop banging your head against the wall
8. Avoid “trigger” foods - you probably know what they are – except chocolate. (just kidding!)
9. Get enough sleep, rest when you need
10. Practice deep breathing.

*Central Oregon's First Annual Women's Expo* November 11 - 12, 2006

Allison Suran will be presenting “POWER IS NOT FORCE” which explores: What is “true” power, how did we lose it, and how you get it back! Watch for details of this exciting event.

## Head and Shoulders...continued

Healthy, differentiated rotations happen naturally with walking. Your head and eyes remain looking forward while your shoulders and arms swing and your upper back rotates around the axis of your spine. Simultaneously, your legs are advancing in alternating patterns to your arm swing, and your pelvis and low back are rotating in the opposite direction of your upper back. Walking on uneven surfaces further advances the skills and coordination of our differentiated-rotational movements. This additional challenge allows your nervous systems to develop more diverse pathways for balance and strength in muscular tissues.

In sports it is easy to see the necessity of differentiated rotation. Downhill skiers look downhill while turning their skis, and therefore their lower body left and right. A good golfer keeps her head down and focused on the ball, while her shoulders and hips rotate fully in each direction. In basketball, soccer and any number of activities, an athlete must learn to move their eyes towards a goal while their hands or feet may be rotating opposite to their aim to get the ball up the court or field.

Rotational movements also support the natural curves in your spine: Your low back, or lumbar spine, has a natural forward curve called lordosis. Your middle/thoracic spine curves slightly back, called kyphosis. Your neck also curves forward in a lordosis. Your spine's natural curves, combined with differentiated rotation, work harmoniously for a happy and healthy back, shoulders, neck and head. But if any component becomes limited, excessive strain is placed elsewhere in your system.

Imagine the curves in a snake. If you straightened that snake out, he wouldn't be able to move very far or very fast, would he? Yet this is what often happens as people learn to "slouch sit" and lose the lumbar curve in their low back and neck.

The loss of lumbar lordosis while sitting is one of the primary reasons people develop neck and shoulder pain. Many movement and exercise programs, including Pilates and Tai Chi, promote a "posterior pelvic tilt" (straightening out the lumbar lordosis) to tighten the abdominal muscles and flatten the stomach. Although these can be fine for short periods of exercise, they are not meant to become a postural habit. It is worth noting that the Asian body-type evolved with less of a lumbar lordosis, and this should not be imposed on the Caucasian body-type as more "correct."

Next time you go for a walk, do a little experiment.

Begin by noticing the differentiated rotations between your head, upper back, and pelvis. The speed of your walk will affect the differentiation: with slow walking there is less, but it increases the faster you go. Once you have a sense of the different rotations between your shoulders and pelvis, bring your attention to the curves in your spine. Play with flattening and exaggerating your lumbar curve and see if you can feel its influence on the ease of rotation during walking.

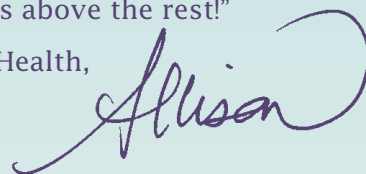
As you learn to utilize the natural curves of your spine you will find sitting much more comfortable. Simply by employing a healthy lumbar lordosis, you will discover your head resting more easily with less tension on your shoulders. It also allows your shoulders to rest at your sides, without rolling forward which can cause pinching syndromes.

If you've been sitting in front of a computer screen for a while, or have taken a long drive, a simple way to reduce the tension in your neck and upper back is to gently begin moving your head from side to side and taking your eyes in the opposite direction. If you're feeling really savvy, you can include alternating rotational movements in your shoulders or pelvis. My newest on-line Feldenkrais® Awareness Through Movement® lesson demonstrates all of these movements and provides you with an excellent opportunity to discover them within yourself.

Although it can be challenging to develop new movement patterns after years of establishing "bad habits," it is possible. New movement and postural patterns are most effective when you learn to incorporate awareness and sensation of how your different body parts are connected and supportive of each other. Rather than replacing an "idea" of proper posture, with a new picture of what posture is supposed to "look" like, healthy posture and movement is a physical inner feeling that, when discovered, can be transferred easily to any activity.

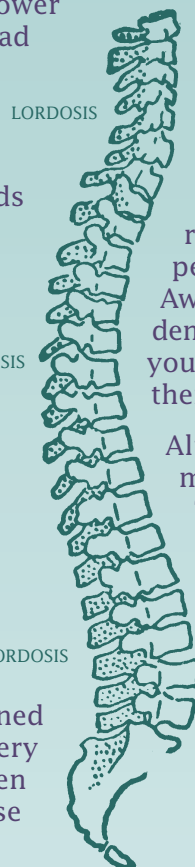
As you employ any or all of these suggestions, your head, neck and shoulders are sure to notice improvements. These improvements will help you age more gracefully and keep you "head and shoulders above the rest!"

In Good Health,



The full Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement® lesson is on-line!

Listen to it by [clicking here!](#)



## Programs & On-going Classes

We are happy to announce our schedule of community programs. Friends and newcomers are always welcome!

FELDENKRAIS®:

On-going Awareness Through Movement ("ATM") classes®  
\$10.00 per class for private clients. Held at HBPT on  
Wednesdays 11:00– Noon.

New! ATM evening class with Allison  
Held on Mondays: 5:15 - 6:15 pm  
6-week sessions: September 11 - October 16th, and October  
23 - November 27th  
Held at: Bend Senior Center, 1600 SE Reed Market Road, Bend  
REGISTER NOW through Bend Park & Rec by calling 388-1133

Drop-ins are welcome at both classes. Just COME and ENJOY!  
When you come to class...

- Wear comfortable loose fitting clothing you can move in.
- We provide mats, pillows and bolsters

NECK AND BACK BASICS: Healing Bridge Physical Therapy offers our patients a 3 hour body mechanics class. This class is designed for current patients to obtain the needed self-management tools of back or neck recovery and prevent future injury or pain. Contact HBPT for more information, dates and times.

TAI CHI: with Paul Benton LMT, DMD. Cost: \$90 for 10 weeks.  
Sessions begin each January, September and March.  
New classes start September 18 and go through November  
22, 2006.

Mondays at 6:30pm for beginners  
Wednesdays at 7:30pm for intermediates  
Held at: Healing Bridge Physical Therapy, 404 NE Penn, Bend  
REGISTER by calling Paul Benton LMT, DMD 771-4802.

## 10 Tips for Shoulder Pain Relief:

1. Avoid slumped posture position-especially during activity using hands or arms
2. Strengthen your upper back and posture muscles by gently pulling your shoulder blades down and together
3. Gently stretch your shoulders with overhead reaches
4. Maintain arm and shoulder strength with a gentle resistive exercise program
5. Avoid activity and positions that cause shoulder pain: seek advice for movement and exercise if pain is present
6. Use cold packs for 10 minutes or heat pack for 20 minutes if pain is present (try ice first if you can tolerate it)
7. Avoid cheering and waving your arms wildly at sports or spectator events
8. Avoid participating in carnival prize winning throwing games or dunk tanks
9. Sleep with a pillow to rest your arm on when in side-lying position
10. If it hurts don't do it—seriously!

## From Core Stability to Core Ability Weekend Workshop

October 13-15, 2006

Presented by Healing Bridge PT & The Bend Feldenkrais Center

- Focus and tune your neuro-muscular system for easy movement
- Develop coordination and strengthen core muscles
- Improve flexibility and balance
- Reduce pain and discomfort

This weekend Feldenkrais workshop will help you generate dexterity and capability in the center of yourself. By focusing on the root of your "hara" (the deep core muscles that make up the balance point of your body), you will learn to improve functional strength and coordination of movement. This series of movement lessons are designed to improve how you do what you do in the world, to make you fit for living.

Friday : 6 - 9pm

Saturday: 10 - 4

Sunday 9 - noon

Early Registration:  
\$75 before  
September 30th,  
then \$90

*A good stance and  
posture reflect a proper  
state of mind.  
- Morihei Ueshiba -*

Please call HBPT at 541-318-7041 to register.  
Major credit cards accepted.

Taught by Dwight Pargee, MS  
Dwight has studied the movement sciences for the last 20 years and holds degrees in exercise science and kinesiology. His private practice at The Bend Feldenkrais Center focuses on improving performance of athletes, musicians and performing artists, along with seniors who have balance & stability issues. He also works with clients who have suffered severe trauma and neurological impairments. Dwight's personal passion for somatic self-development is expressed in his love for cooking, poetry, Aikido and fly-fishing.

*Russell Delman* Feldenkrais  
Trainer® and Meditation teacher, (whose teachings many of you have benefited from in the past), will be in Eugene for a weekend public workshop September 16th and 17th. Contact Jan Cox at [janotm@wildblue.net](mailto:janotm@wildblue.net) for details.

# HBPT Lets Loose at the Company Picnic

Let's start this party out with some creative and playful BODY ART...as taught by our own Tina "the clown" Myers: WOW, what FUN!



Shana making her mark on her Man (it's a heart w/ an arrow through it)



Georgia's always "horsing around"



LIVE Entertainment by Tyler and Josh Suran



Just look at the legs on Kari

Nancy - is she preparing for her Women's Health class? Or, our annual water balloon toss?



1, 2, 3, TOSS!



...and a little further



Karen and Dave - enjoying the Sunshine!



Martin is all eyes for his LOVE Susie



...and Shana's legs are lookin' pretty good too!



A little further...



Hold that BOSS back!!!

## 10 Tips for Neck Pain Relief:

1. Find neutral posture position, take deep slow breaths
2. Allow your shoulders to drop gently down-away from your ears
3. Try gentle chin tucks to stretch the back of your neck
4. In good posture, gently turn head side to side for gentle stretch
5. Avoid sudden or fast head movement - move gently
6. Do not sleep with more than one pillow
7. Try a cervical roll or pillow at night for added neck support
8. Avoid prolonged baths, reading in bed or other activities that puts your neck in the "forward head" position
9. Avoid sitting in the middle seats for ping pong or tennis matches (that's a joke!)
10. Use heat for 20 minutes or cold packs for 10 minutes to decrease discomfort and muscle tightness.



Looks like she got what she deserved!