

HEALTH

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From Head to Toe

PROPER POSTURE IS NOT AS SIMPLE AS SITTING UP STRAIGHT, AND YOU CAN'T ACHIEVE IT BY WALKING WITH A BOOK ON YOUR HEAD. DO THESE SIX AMAZING MOVES THREE TIMES A WEEK TO HELP YOUR BODY WORK ITS BEST.

BY KATE DALEY

THE PRO: Surya
Eckardt, 37, is
the founder of
the Esoteric
Fitness program



1 SHOULDER-BLADES With your feet apart in a wide stance, turn and pull the fingers of both hands together while controlling your shoulder blades. Separate your fingers and extend your arms to open

up your back muscles. Lift your arms to the ceiling, then with palms behind, open your chest by leaning your arms and extending their outer wrists so your shoulder blades come together. Repeat this series twice.



2 CORE & CHEST Start with your arms bent at about 90 degrees, with palms facing down. Lengthen the side with your arms extended forward and your back straight.

When you're in the target position, keep your arms straight and spread them open into second's pose. Repeat the series three times per side.



3 CORE STRENGTH Tighten your abs and lean to one side, keeping your legs bent. Extend your arms above your head. Then, with

palms facing outward, pull arms downward into one's above. Return to standing. Repeat the series three times per side.

POSTURE PERFECT

"Good posture doesn't apply to everyone the same way — you have to consider your own natural shape," says Terese Grassie, clinical specialist in musculoskeletal

physiotherapy at the University of Ottawa. Sports Medicine and Physiotherapy Centre. And forcing yourself into a "proper" position can actually make things worse. "Many back patients who either being told to sit up straight was the target for pain-producing muscles that surround the back, which are meant to be used in hard load situations. They end up compressing their discs, putting pressure on the neck and lungs. To achieve that 'ideal posture' they're just compressing all of their vital organs." Firing improper posture isn't as simple as strengthening

your core. "It's about motor learning, retraining the brain and letting go of the muscles that are overactive," Grassie says. "Focus first to increase certain muscles on one side of the body, and then build to tension and pain. The body will provide a protective response, and in doing that, will cause more muscles to tighten up, leading to faulty movement patterns that further contribute to pain." Generally, people have to learn to move differently," says Grassie. If you're feeling stiff or achy, see a physiotherapist, try these focusing downward exercises like yoga, to cut up. Exercises are: 1) Sit at a desk at any angle, feet flat on the floor. 2) Get up and move around, avoiding your arms and stretching.



4 HIPS LENGTHEN Large to one side, leaning your hips back if they're pulling in the direction of the legs. With arms fully extended, use the weight of your bottom arm to stretch the hip and neck with your bottom, slowly

pulling in the direction of the legs. With arms fully extended, use the weight of your bottom arm to stretch the hip and neck with your bottom, slowly

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5 HAMSTRINGS & CHEST COMBINATION Start with one leg fully extended on a chair, one foot pulled in and your standing leg bent slightly. Your foot can be pointed or a

flat, or your arms to the ceiling. Then reach upward with one arm while lowering the opposite arm. Repeat the same stretch with the other leg. After

using both sides, extend knees upward, then spread arms back to a bent position behind your head, contracting your Abductor Muscles. Repeat the series three times per leg.



6 SPINE & CORE MOBILITY Start with one leg fully extended on a chair, one foot pulled in and your standing leg bent slightly. Your foot can be pointed or a

6 SPINE & CORE MOBILITY Slippers a chair, stand with your feet slightly apart, knees slightly bent, spine rounded and torso pulled in. Rotate

your sit outside forward and slowly pull your hip from side to side. Round it up so far from the chair as possible while still keeping legs straight, then gently

round at the waist until you feel a stretch in your spine. In that position, bend your knees and lift your hips from side to side again. Do the whole series once.