

Posture key to healthy spine

By Constance Sommer, Los Angeles Times

Christiane Carman believed she had good posture. Then one day she woke up with a crick in her neck, a nagging little pain on the left side that didn't go away. Soon it was shooting down her left arm. By the time she landed at UCLA's Spine Clinic, the pain had become her everyday companion. Your problem, a physical therapist at the clinic, Keri Pegram, told her, is the way you sit at work. In other words, Carman had poor posture.

Posture can seem the sort of problem that is easily corrected. But when poor posture becomes a habit, experts say, it can lead to a host of problems, including back pain, ancillary injuries in the shoulders and knees, and struggles with balance and endurance.

"The more the muscles have to work," said Alan Hilibrand, an orthopaedic spine surgeon and professor at Philadelphia's Jefferson Medical College, "the more they get stressed and fatigued."

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