

Straight-Up Smiles

4 moves to improve your posture – and your mood

YOUR MOTHER KNEW WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT WHEN SHE SAID, “STAND UP STRAIGHT AND SMILE!” Recent research shows improving posture with exercises that focus on mindful breathing also can lead to reduced depression and anxiety.

In a recent study of the effects of posture-building yoga on reducing depression and anxiety, psychiatrist Richard Brown, MD, PhD, of the Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, found posture matters for people with arthritis. His research showed better posture can help you relax, boost the body’s ability to reduce stress and improve overall mood.

The good news is that many posture-improving exercises are simple to learn and easy to perform.

For a quick way to boost your posture and your mood, Matthew J. Taylor, PhD, a physical therapist who treats people with osteoarthritis and RA at Dynamic Systems Rehab Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz., recommends using techniques found in yoga or in core-strengthening exercises. Both work on the “corset” muscles around your trunk, back and pelvis. Here are four favorites. Be sure to check with your doctor before doing any moves that involve joints affected with arthritis.

– KELLY A.J. POWERS



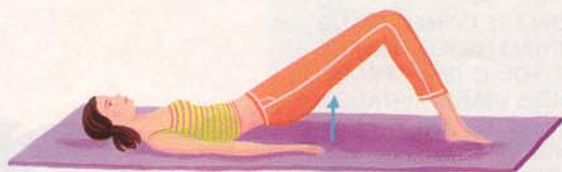
Seated Warrior Pose

Sit on edge of a chair with both feet on the ground and back straight. Inhale while raising both arms overhead to a comfortable height, palms facing one another. Exhale while lowering arms to side, keeping spine tall. Repeat slowly 20 times.



Happy Baby

Lie on your back in bed or on a yoga mat. Bend knees and pull into the chest. With arms holding back of thighs, hug knees into chest. Hold for several seconds, then lower buttocks slowly to the floor. Repeat.



Bridging Pelvic Tilt

Lie on your back. Keep knees bent, feet flat. Tighten your stomach muscles, and raise your bottom off the ground a few inches. Hold for several seconds, then lower yourself slowly to the floor. Repeat.



Corset Contraction

While standing or sitting, pull in your belly button and hold this contraction for several seconds. Release and relax. Breathe in during contraction and breathe out during release. Repeat 20 times.



Bharadvaja's Twist

Sit perpendicular on a chair, holding each side of the back of the chair, and twist torso toward the back of the chair. Hold for several seconds. Reposition yourself to sit on the other side to repeat.