



## **MUSCLE AND MECHANICAL IMBALANCES**

**By**

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The Human form is molded by our surroundings and our habits. Our upright bodies buoyed upwards against the downward forces of gravity, adapt to the individual life history of all that has ever happened to us good and bad, from injuries and accidents to the mimicking of those we grow up with and to the uneven loads that we place upon them. We are physically, mentally and emotionally a product of our experiences. No two people move or look alike.

I remember a few years back hosting the head of the Physiotherapy association here in Hong Kong. He was a short, burly man with the proverbial barn door shoulders and cannonball size biceps. Strong yes, but hugely out of alignment. I placed 2 digital scales side by side and had him stand on them and my predictions became ever clearer. He was 27 pounds heavier on his dominant side. This is an enormous postural shift and was actually weakening and destabilizing his whole postural frame. It's not a question of if but when he would have suffered from some form of compression discomfort. Suffice it to say we could not let him leave the workshop without some straightening up. After only 30 minutes of targeted corrective and remedial postural correction he left with only 4 pounds of overload on his dominant side.

How common it is to hear of a client complain of soreness on only one side of their body? Is it purely because this is their naturally dominant side and the tissues are therefore more compressed or is this the side they lean towards when shifting gears when driving or maybe their bodies translate to that one side due to the incorrect positioning of their laptops on their computer desks.

75% of the working population spend 7 -10 hours a day in a position that is unfavorable to good alignment. This adaptation process will set into your body patterns like glue.

Exercise and one-sided sports are both potential culprits, but sometimes there's more to it than that.

Our unique movement patterns overwork certain muscles and underuse others. Mechanical and muscular imbalances result in weakness and muscular deficiency where the muscle literally forgets what it needs to do to work properly.

Overused muscles gradually become adaptively shortened and resistive losing bounce, pliability and flexibility.

A tight muscle is in fact a weak muscle.

An underused muscle is also correspondingly weak. A recent article on health and Fitness in the Hong Kong based daily newspaper "The South China Post" stated that most women in China were ostensibly fitter today than in recent years due to the explosive growth in aerobic activities and group spinning in gyms and fitness centers but it highlighted something that I too have noticed over the years. Most people are becoming noticeably weaker.

Adapting and adopting better movement patterns and improving those poor postural habits such as crossing legs when sitting or slouching over the phone when seated. We all know when we are doing harmful movements as it hurts to do them.

All you need to do is to shift your body around so that it finds its own sweet spot where you know that the center of mass is in the right place. It just feels better!

Automatically your balance will shift. Your performance will improve and more importantly you will decrease the likelihood of injuries as a result of using your body more symmetrically.

Here are a few simple tips for improved postural awareness.

a) Don't sleep on the same side or on your stomach with your head turned the same way every night. Vary your sleep positions Try sleeping on your back for part of the night.

b) When climbing stairs or going down stairs try to use your non-dominant side to lead the way.

c) Only cross your legs at the ankles. This will take a huge load of the lumbar spine.

d) Use a sling bag or back pack to carry goods or purses. Or if you cannot do away with your on-sided purse swop them often from one shoulder to the next.

e) Swop hands to create new adaptive motor patterns when holding your hairdryer or toothbrush. Try throwing a ball with the non-dominant hand.

f) Try to stand evenly on both legs. Keep the legs slightly wide. Work on improving your balance on the less-dominant side.

g) Ladies: Do not lock out your knees when standing still for any length of time. Soft knees keep the hamstrings and gluteal muscles working properly and help keep the blood flowing throughout the lower extremities.

h) Don't walk and operate your phone. Stay aware of your surroundings and also don't allow the posture to collapse when walking. Walking is an excellent movement for the whole body.

i) If you are a golf or tennis enthusiast you will overwork the dominant side by at least 3 to 1. Chances are the dominant side of your body is more developed than the other. Of course, this can be hard to reverse.

Thought for the day:

Movement should be about Purpose, Playfulness, Function and Fun

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