

A healthier today RUSH Generations and a vital tomorrow



→ Your Health

Stand (and Sit) Tall: The Power of Good Posture



Laura Deon, MD
Physical medicine and
rehabilitation specialist

Good posture not only helps you maintain a healthy spine and avoid injuries — there's even evidence that it can improve your mood.

Posture 101: What good posture looks like

A healthy spine has three natural curves that make an elongated “S” shape: forward at the neck, backward at the upper back and forward again at the lower back.

Laura Deon, MD, a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at RUSH University Medical Center, suggests a helpful visual for good posture: an invisible string that extends from your tailbone up your spine and out the top of your head.

“You want the string to be straight at all times, drawing you up toward the sky with your hips, shoulders and head all aligned,” she says. Your abdomen should be pulled in. Knees should be soft, not locked. And you should be looking straight ahead, not down.

Deon offers five reasons to make a point of good posture:

1. Less stress on bones and joints. Aligning your spine means that you're using your muscles properly, which reduces stress on bones and joints. This decreases abnormal wear and tear that can lead to osteoarthritis. If your posture hasn't been good, correcting it might feel uncomfortable for a few weeks, but stick with the effort.

2. Strengthen crucial core muscles. Core muscles in your back, hips, abdomen and pelvic floor work together to stabilize your spine. “Pilates and yoga provide excellent core-strengthening exercises,” Deon says, “but standing and sitting properly are probably the best things you can do to activate your core. It's actually much harder work than you think!”

3. Breathe more easily. Your lungs are made of soft tissue, so the more space you open up in your chest by standing tall and pulling your shoulders back, the more they'll be able to expand and allow you to breathe deeply.

4. Boost your mood and energy. Research investigating the connection between posture and emotion has shown that good posture can actually make you feel better. Posture affects our emotions and thoughts, and vice versa. Slouching makes it easier to think negative thoughts, while sitting or standing in a strong, upright position encourages empowering thoughts. Standing tall instead of scrunching up also means that you radiate more energy to others, which can help you feel more confident.

5. Keep your neck and spine healthy for life. Consistently good posture prevents your spine from becoming fixed in an abnormal position, which gets harder to address over time — “all the more reason to work on bad habits starting right now,” Deon says. If you're trying to reverse the effects of years of bad posture, a physiatrist or physical therapist can help. They'll evaluate your posture and muscle strength, and work with you on a program of exercises and stretching.

In This Issue

- 2 **Important Conversations**
Who Will Make Your Medical Decisions if You Can't?
- 2 **What Matters**
The Four Ms of Age-Friendly Health Care
- 3 **Stages**
How Gender Affects Your Health
- 4 **Things to Know**
4 Types of Complementary Medicine



Join us on April 5 for a discussion on back and neck pain. See the calendar insert for details.

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Who Will Make Your Medical Decisions if You Can't?



Christy Howard-Steele
Chaplain

If you're too ill to communicate your wishes to medical providers, who will do it for you? **Rev. Christy Howard-Steele, MS, MS, MDiv**, a RUSH chaplain and RUSH University director of clinical pastoral education, points out that serious illness or injury happens to most people eventually.

"We'll likely all face a time when we can't speak for ourselves," she says.

"It's essential to have someone who can speak for you, who knows what's important to you and what you would or wouldn't want."

In Illinois, you can choose someone to speak for you by giving them power of attorney (POA) for health care. This is done with a simple form that you can fill out on your own without needing a lawyer. You'll find a copy of the Illinois health care POA form online at bit.ly/RUSH_HealthCarePOA.

Choosing your health care agent

Your health care POA document will name your health care agent: the person you choose to speak for you in the event that you can't.

Your agent doesn't have to be a family member. Howard-Steele suggests thinking about an adult in your life who:

- Knows you well
- You trust to act in your best interest
- Can make difficult decisions
- Will honor your values and preferences, even if theirs are different
- Is comfortable talking with your health care providers and asking questions
- Is willing to take on this important role for you

If you don't have a health care POA in place

If you don't have a health care POA in place and can't make your own decisions, your provider will choose a health care surrogate to make decisions for you.

State law dictates that the surrogate be chosen from the people in your life in a specified order, starting with your legal guardian or spouse.

Family members share equal status as health care surrogates. So, for example, if your adult children are designated as your surrogates, all of them have to agree on care decisions.

Howard-Steele points out that this can create conflict. "Family members can have different opinions, or they can be far flung and difficult to get a hold of," she says

Completing a POA can help give you peace of mind not only about your medical care, but also about sparing your family from conflict, Howard-Steele says. "More than anything, it's critical to complete your POA form before you have a serious illness or accident that could limit your ability to speak for yourself."

Join us on June 21 for a discussion on health care POAs, other kinds of advance directives and elder law. See the calendar insert for details.



The 4Ms of Age-Friendly Health Care

The Schaalman Senior Voices program aims to amplify the voices of older adults and what matters to them. **What matters** is one of the 4Ms of an Age-Friendly Health System (AFHS) — a designation that RUSH University Medical Center was the first in Illinois to receive.

In an AFHS, all four Ms — **mobility, medication and mind**, in addition to **what matters** — are elements of high-quality care. Together, the 4Ms give health systems a road map for focusing on the needs of older adults.

The 4Ms are also a framework you can use to set your own health care goals and priorities and explore your preferences for care. Ask yourself: What matters to me most about my mobility? My medication? My mind? Your answers to these questions can help you clearly communicate your wishes and concerns to your health care providers.

We'd love to hear your thoughts about what matters to you. If you'd like to share a short video, 60 to 90 seconds long, we've made it easy for you to record one here: bit.ly/RecordMyStory.

Join us on May 31 for a special Older Americans Month event. See the calendar insert for details.

How Gender Affects Your Health



Pamela Strauss, MD
Internal medicine specialist

Most health conditions affect men and women in varying degrees and ways. In some cases, there's no ready explanation for why certain diseases are more common in one sex than in another — and in others, complicated genetic, physiological and hormonal factors are at work. Here's a look at some of the conditions that pose differing risks.

Higher risk for men

Heart disease: Among men age 65 and over, more than 39% have heart disease, compared to about 27% of women in the same age group.

While women's bodies tend to be pear-shaped, men's bodies are generally apple-shaped. "Men almost always put weight on around the middle," says **Pamela Strauss, MD**, an internal medicine specialist at RUSH University Medical Center. "And we know this type of body fat, known as visceral, is a heart disease risk factor that many women simply don't share."

Also, men don't have the protection of estrogen. Estrogen may keep women's cholesterol levels in check, reducing a key heart disease risk factor — but once women hit menopause and estrogen levels drop, their heart disease risk goes up.

Parkinson's disease: This neurological disease affects about 50% more men than women. Researchers suggest that this may also have to do with estrogen, which protects neurological function by activating certain proteins or interacting with molecules called free radicals. Additionally, several studies have pointed to the possibility that Parkinson's disease has a genetic link to the male X chromosome.

Men are also more at risk for conditions that include autism, kidney stones and pancreatitis.

Higher risk for women

Stroke: Each year in the U.S., about 55,000 more women have strokes than men. Many factors play into this statistic, but estrogen is chief among them.

Birth control pills, hormone replacement therapy and pregnancy raise risk, but the underlying mechanism is shifting estrogen levels. Changes in levels of estrogen, not the estrogen itself, affect the substances in blood that cause clots. More activity results in more clotting, and that can lead to a higher risk of stroke.

Osteoporosis: Nearly 80% of the estimated 10 million Americans who have osteoporosis, or a loss of bone mass, are female.

Women start out with thinner, smaller bones and less bone tissue than men. Through most of their lives, women's bones are protected by estrogen, which may block a substance that kills bone cells. However, the drop in estrogen levels during menopause can lead to osteoporosis. The resulting bone loss takes a toll: Nearly half of women over 50 will break a bone because of osteoporosis.

Women are also more at risk for conditions like migraines, Alzheimer's disease, urinary tract issues and multiple sclerosis.

Protecting your health is gender-neutral

Men and women need to do basically the same things for better health. "Eat a healthy diet,



exercise and don't smoke," Strauss says. "That could be as simple as adding 15 minutes of walking to your day or putting a few extra fruits and vegetables on your plate."

Of course, it's also important to address any health concerns. Your doctor should know your family's health history, and you should know your key numbers, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and BMI.

This is also where gender plays a role. Women go to the doctor more often than men, Strauss says. "We need to make sure everyone is taking care of their health."

Join us on May 3 for a roundtable on men's health, and on May 24 for a roundtable on women's health. See the calendar insert for details.

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PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of Rush. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of Rush. Rush is an academic health system comprising Rush University Medical Center, Rush Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital.

4 Types of Complementary Medicine

Complementary medicine can be an effective tool for managing pain as part of a holistic approach that could also include medication, cognitive therapy, physical therapy and medical procedures.

Studies show that complementary methods can help you reduce your use of medications, improve your overall function and boost your overall well-being. It's important to discuss any of these treatments with your health care providers before you add them to your routine.

1. Acupuncture and acupressure are the clinical application of tiny needles or gentle pressure to specific points on the body. They can often help osteoarthritis, migraines, back, neck and knee pain, neuropathy, postoperative pain and dental pain.

2. Massage and manipulative therapies include massage and chiropractic treatment. They're most often used in low-back and neck pain, osteoarthritis, general musculoskeletal pain and postoperative pain. (Chiropractic manipulation of the neck can be risky, and many clinicians don't recommend it.)

3. Relaxation techniques, also called mind-body practices, include mindfulness-based stress reduction and meditation. These approaches can help you cope with pain and improve insomnia, mood issues and fatigue.

4. Movement-based therapies like tai chi, Qigong and yoga have physical benefits — like helping to improve balance — and can also contribute to emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

Join us on April 19 for a discussion on complementary medicine. See the calendar insert for details.

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Spring 2023 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually.
You can view them online or listen to them via phone.

For updates on RUSH Generations programs, sign up
for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online,

visit the RUSH Generations
YouTube page at the time
of the event:

cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only):

Call **(312) 626-6799** at the
time of the event and enter
meeting ID 413 655 0125#.

April

Back and Neck Pain

Wednesday, April 5, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Back and neck pain can happen for many reasons. How do you know if it's just an ache that will resolve on its own, or if it's something serious that needs medical attention? RUSH experts provide an overview of back and neck issues and ways to alleviate the pain.

Colorectal Cancer

Wednesday, April 12, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Colorectal cancer is one of the most common types of cancer — and one of the most preventable, through screening, behavioral changes and understanding your risk and family history. Join us for a discussion on preventing and treating colon cancer.

Complementary Medicine

Wednesday, April 19, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Managing your health successfully means finding strategies and practices that help you take care of your health and well-being. At this lecture, you'll learn about complementary medicine options such as massage, acupuncture and aromatherapy, and how they can help you achieve your health care goals.

May

Men's Health Roundtable

Wednesday, May 3, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Join us for a panel presentation on key health issues that affect men of all ages, plus a discussion on better self-care to increase the odds of living a longer, healthier life.

Women's Health Roundtable

Wednesday, May 24, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Join us to hear from experts in the field of women's health about relevant health concerns, wellness and prevention strategies.

Schaalman Senior Voices Thought Leadership Lecture

Wednesday, May 31, noon to 1 p.m.

To celebrate Older Americans Month, we welcome Robyn Stone, PhD, for the inaugural Schaalman Senior Voices Thought Leadership Lecture. Stone, a researcher and authority on aging and public policy, is the senior vice president of research at LeadingAge and co-director of the LeadingAge LTSS (Long-Term Services and Supports) Center at UMass Boston.

June

LGBTQ Sexuality and Aging

Wednesday, June 7, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

What does it mean to age with pride? Learn about LGBTQ+ health and wellness, including accessing affirming health care and resources at RUSH. We'll also discuss innovative strategies for strengthening community support for LGBTQ+ older adults.

Advance Directives and Elder Law

Wednesday, June 21, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Presenters with expertise in legal and social work services for older adults will provide information on how to make sure that your wishes are followed when it comes to medical care and other important topics. You'll get an overview of directives including the health care power of attorney, do not resuscitate orders, practitioner orders for life-sustaining treatment and others.

Classes and Workshops

These classes and workshops are a mix of Zoom and in-person events.

To participate in Zoom events, you'll need internet access and the Zoom app on a computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam. Please call **(800) 757-0202** and be ready to provide a valid phone number and email address so we can send you a Zoom link. If you don't have access to Zoom but would like to join a self-guided version of a workshop with a weekly conference call check-in, please call **(800) 757-0202**.

To participate in in-person events, pre-registration is required. Please call **(800) 757-0202** to reserve your spot.

For updates from RUSH Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Classes

Gentle Chair Yoga (Zoom)

Thursdays, May 25 to July 13

11 a.m. to noon

\$40 for the eight-class session

Embracing Aging (Zoom)

Mondays, June 5 to July 31

(no class July 3)

1 to 2 p.m.

\$40 for the eight-class session

Workshops

Take Charge of Your Health (Zoom)

Fridays, May 5 to June 16

10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Walk With Ease (in person)

Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays,

April 12 to May 19

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Garfield Park Conservatory

Call **(800) 757-0202** to register.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (Zoom)

Wednesdays and Fridays,

April 19 to June 9

11 a.m. to noon

Learning to Live Well With Chronic Pain (Zoom)

Mondays, May 8 to June 26

2 to 4:30 p.m.

Take Charge of Your Health (in person)

Thursdays, June 15 to July 20

9:30 a.m. to noon

Johnston R. Bowman Center, 710

S. Paulina St., Suite 316, Chicago

Call **(800) 757-0202** to register.

Both Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Polski (Polish)

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العربية (Arabic)

ملاحظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة العربية، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متاحة لك مجانًا. اتصل بالرقم 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

Русский (Russian)

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните по телефону 1-312-563-2987 (телетайп: 1-312-563-2987).

ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

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