

BREATHING, POSTURE AND EASY EXERCISES – THE BASICS

The essence of good speech is good breathing. Good breathing is helped by good posture.

The spine is made up of small interlinking bones called vertebrae. These bones protect the spinal cord or the major nerve cord. The backbone is very important and needs to be looked after. For good health and maximum movement, we must be aware that bones should grow in the right direction. The spine must grow straight and strong – good posture.

1. Lie on the floor – arch spine shoulders and bottom touching the floor
2. Push the spine down and try and feel each vertebrae touching the floor
3. Do this exercise occasionally to help strengthen the spine

This exercise shows how we can help straighten the spine. We have tended to adopt armchair postures. Poor spine formation can affect general health and movement. Bad posture that is never corrected can lead to possible lack of body movement and inability to do things such as dance or sport.

Strong, relaxed neck muscles aid good posture. The head is the heaviest part of our bodies, a newborn baby's head must always be supported. Neck muscles are needed to be strong for good posture. These muscles, if tense, can aggravate health. Therefore, exercise and posture work are allied.

1. Sit up against a wall in a normal, slouched position – measure height
2. Sit up straight and measure again

This exercises illustrated that we lose approximately 8cm in height with bad posture.

When breathing out, always leave a little reserve of air in the lungs – as in petrol in the tank of a car. There is always some left.

1. During the normal school timetable of lessons, such as maths, English, geography... get children to stand up, stretch their spines, breathe deep and relax back into their lesson

Make sure children are aware of posture. As with a machine, the body needs too be in a good position in order to function properly.

1. Use a kazoo, breathe and sing “ooo” into it

With one breath use the voice based on rhythm patterns.

2. Using the lips only, breathe in and let the air out through the sound “brrr” and keep the lips loose
3. Using the index finger as a toothbrush between the lips, breath in and out and say “ooo” and “aah”, again keeping the lips loose

If the spine continues to curve with bad posture from sitting and standing positions, it will grow curved.

With good postures, our lungs are able to use their full capacity. With bad posture, shallow breathing occurs.

1. Imagine your chest region (lung area) as a barrel
2. Breathe from the bottom of the barrel
3. Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth
4. Breathe in through the mouth and out through the mouth
5. Take a really deep breathe and hold for 10 seconds and breathe out slowly

Too much deep breathing can cause hyperventilation – twice only. With all breathing, the diaphragm should extend, not the shoulders.