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## **The Postural System: The Importance of it and How to Train it** *By Josh Young, R.M.T*

### **What is the Postural System?**

Most people believe that their postural system consists of the abs and at most the lower back, and they train it sporadically or when they're getting ready to go away on vacation. However, the postural system includes many more muscles including the **psoas, glutes, rectus abdominus, internal and external obliques, transverse abdominus, erector spinae muscles-spinalis, longissimus, iliocostalis** as well as the **SITS muscles** that stabilize the shoulders. That's a lot of muscles, and I don't think crunches and leg raises hit them all.

### **Why train the Postural system?**

The postural system has several important functions including **forward & lateral flexion, extension and rotation of the torso, alignment of the legs compressing and protecting the organs within the abdominal cavity, providing a stable base from which the limbs move and probably the most important function, stability of the spine during both static and moving postures.** This means that the postural system is very important and should be conditioned consistently and with function, not aesthetics in mind.

### **How to train the Postural system**

When conditioning the postural system, be sure to include movements that mimic the movements we perform in our daily lives. When you're in a gym on a machine or on the floor doing crunches, you are training only one dimensionally. In life, especially when performing your profession/sport your body doesn't work that way.

It works in three planes, sagittal, transverse and frontal. Why not condition your body the way you use it in your everyday life?

### **Exercises to train the Postural system**

#### **Stretching**

Due to the repetitive nature of most professions/sports it is very easy for the muscles of the body to become tight especially if mechanics are poor and the body poorly conditioned, particularly the muscles of the hands, forearms, neck, shoulders and low back if you work at a desk. To counteract the stress imposed on the desk worker's body, active movement should be done daily with focus on the areas that are abused most in their daily life (e.g. postural chain).

#### **Planks**

Increase stability in the hips, abs, low back and shoulders by means of isometric contraction. They also promote scapular alignment and activation of the TA. A MUST exercise for everyone and especially great for anyone who stands or sits at work all day.

#### **2-feet**

- elbows @ 90', abs tight, straight line shoulders to hips
- strengthens abs, low back, hips and shoulders



### **1-foot**

-elbows @ 90°, abs tight, straight line shoulders to hips raise foot 3-7", hold 3-10sec, repeat 2-4x each side. Avoid rotating @ torso  
-strengthens abs, low back, hips and shoulders



### **\*side planks**

-elbow @ 90°, hips up, body at attention, don't fall open/closed, hold for time and repeat both sides  
-strengthens abs/obliques, hips & shoulder stabilizers



### **\*1-arm**

-lift arm 1-3" or extend arm, hold 3-10sec, repeat 2-4x each side. Avoid rotating @ torso.  
-Strengthens abs, low back, hip & shoulder stabilizers

**\*stretch out**

-start with elbow @ 90', then extend elbows 2-8" past shoulders, hold 3-10sec, toe in to 90' elbow, repeat 3-6x.

-strengthens abs, shoulders and low back

**\*1-arm/leg opposite**

-start with elbows @ 90', then lift or extend arm & raise opposite foot 3-7", hold 3-10sec, repeat 2-4x each side. Avoid rotating @ torso

-strengthens abs, low back, hips, hamstrings & shoulder stabilizers

**\*Swimming/Superman's**

-abs tight, lift chest, use opposite arm/leg, lift 5-12" hold 2-5sec, 10-20reps

-strengthens abs, low back, glutes, hamstrings & shoulder stabilizers



**Bridges**

Improve the muscle activation and strength of the glutes, hamstrings, low back & posterior shoulders. Learning how to use the powerful glute muscles can greatly improve a therapist's strength and endurance as well as reduce their risk of low back pain.

**\*Knees @ 90' 1 or 2 leg**

lying supine, arms @ 45' pushing into floor with toes up, activate glutes and lift hips to ceiling. Hold 3-10sec, lower and repeat 10-20x

**\*Dead-man's**

lying supine legs extended, arms @ 45' pushing into floor, activate glutes and lift hips to ceiling. Hold 3-10sec, lower repeat 10-20x

**Alphabet game X, T, Y, W**

Improves shoulder stability and posture by increasing the strength of the muscles of the rotator cuff and pulling the scapula back and down. Especially great for anyone who works in a semi-flexed, seated or standing position all day.

**X**-arms/legs 2x wide, abs tight, lift chest, thumbs up, lift arms 5-12" hold 2-5sec, 8-12x  
-strengthens shoulder stabilizers, low back, glutes & hamstrings

**T**-feet together, arms 90', abs tight, lift chest, thumbs up, lift arms 5-12" hold 2-5sec, 8-12x  
-strengthens shoulder stabilizers, low back, glutes & hamstrings

**Y**-feet together, arms 40', abs tight, lift chest, thumbs up, lift arms 5-12" hold 2-5sec, 8-12x  
-strengthens shoulder stabilizers, low back, glutes, hamstrings

**W**-feet together, arms 90' with 90' bend @ elbow, abs tight, lift chest, thumbs up, lift arms 5-12" hold 2-5sec, 8-12x  
-strengthens shoulder stabilizers, low back, glutes, hamstrings

### **Benefits of Postural training**

If the postural system is consistently conditioned a person will develop their neuromuscular co-ordination which will lead to improved posture, increased joint strength and muscular endurance as well as enhanced pelvic stability along with a strong stable trunk from where all movement originates. This will allow people to work more efficiently with less effort and less risk of injury.

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