

Posture

As part of a Dental team, we gather a huge amount of personal information through patient contact — details about their oral health, physical wellbeing, and psychological state. This information cumulates to a subconscious assessment as to how healthy a patient is relative to their age. Does a patient spring to mind - Maybe the 5 year old girl you saw today who had the vocabulary and social awareness of a 10-year-old? Or the 85 year old who said that they are off to India next month for a yoga retreat?

We can't do too much to change the 4 year old version of ourselves, but we can try to impact our future. Working in the health sector and interacting with patients has made me acutely aware of my own health — both physical and mental. Musculoskeletal issues are common among Dental Practitioners and can even result in early retirement and long standing pain. However these effects can be minimised by building good habits now. What do we tell patients: prevention is key in maintaining health, so what can I do to keep my body as capable and comfortable as possible now and in the future?

It is an uphill battle. Especially in Dentistry - we aren't going to be the first clinicians who have to stop working because of a bad back after spending hours craning our necks over patients.

That's why I think it's important to have a bit of a reset every couple of months — a moment of self reflection. How is my posture? Am I protecting my body both in and out of the clinic?

And this isn't just something for the Dentists to think about. This should be a consideration for the whole team; Dental Hygienists dealing with repetitive movements, and prolonged, static positioning. Dental Nurses awkwardly contorting themselves around the annoying left handed Clinician and Administrative Staff sitting at a computer that's just slightly too low or a chair that doesn't quite support their back.

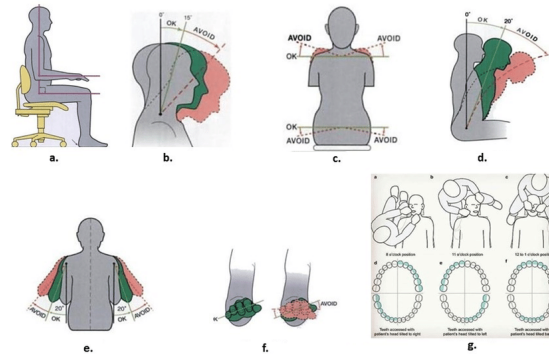
We want to look and feel good in our bodies — not just now, but in the future. I am trying to integrate a few of these improvements into my routine:

Micro stretches between patients:

- Shoulder rolls
- Wrist stretches
- Gentle spinal twists while seated
- Standing and walking during breaks

Patient positioning:

- Ask the patient to move their head for optimal vision.
- Chair positioning - I know it can be awkward to ask to put the patients chair back more!



Your positioning:

- Keep the spine in a neutral, straight alignment (minimise forward bending)
- Hips slightly higher than knees; feet flat, stable base
- Minimal neck flexion/extension. Eyes should look downward gently, not with neck bent deeply
- Use “clock positions” to minimise twisting or leaning: for a right-handed clinician, usually between 8 and 1 o’clock.

Outside of work

Stretch and Strengthening exercises: (I need to work on this!)

- Focus on mobility exercises for the neck, shoulders, hips, and back.
- Add core-strengthening workouts (like pilates or yoga) 2–3 times per week to support posture and balance
- Consider regular treatments like osteopathy or physiotherapy massage

Remember we need to take care of ourselves, not just our patients!