

**POSTURAL DEFORMITIES IN CHILDREN:
A REVIEW**

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ABSTRACT

Postural deformities are a commonly encountered problem among children. Most of the aches and pains of adults are the result, not of injuries, but of the long-term effects of distortions in posture or alignment that have their origins in childhood or adolescence. Television, video entertainment, motorized transportation, fast food and lack of regular physical activity contribute to the poor physical condition of children. Childhood obesity has increased dramatically in the past decade. Countries in economic transition from underdeveloped to developed, such as South Africa, are particularly affected and have an increasing prevalence of obesity across all economic levels and age groups. In a developing country like South Africa, where overweight/obesity co-exists with undernutrition, there is an urgent need to prevent unhealthy trends in diet and physical activity. School screening is mandatory in schools in 26 states of the United States (US) for children between 10 and 16 years of age. Previous studies conducted in the US found that 160 out of 1000 people suffer from scoliosis (Boachie-Adjei & Lonner, 1996). This means that scoliosis is as prevalent as hypertension or diabetes mellitus. Identification of postural deformities at an early stage makes early treatment possible, which may, in future, prevent serious postural abnormalities. The aim of this review article is to define the concept of good posture, analyze normal postural development and postural deformities, and discuss some of the developmental factors affecting posture.

Key words: Posture, postural deformities, obesity, physical activity, stunted, malnutrition, scoliosis.

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INTRODUCTION

Posture is a concept that dates back as far as the early Greek times, when emphasis was laid on "good posture" (Solberg, 1993:8). In the last Victorian half century (1850–1902) it was common for physical educators to be preoccupied with "posture". If postural deformities were simply an aesthetic problem, the concern about them might be limited to appearance. However, it must be recognized that postural faults that persist into adulthood may cause discomfort, pain or a permanent deformity (Kendall, McCreary, Provance, Rodgers & Romani, 2005:51). During malalignment, muscles are resting in a shortened or lengthened position and eventually, adaptive shortening or lengthening may result (Reigger-Krugh & Keysor, 1996:164; Hrysonallis & Goodman, 2001:385). The body's attempt to compensate for imbalance generally exacerbates the problem and can lead to more serious disability (Norris, 2000:94).