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## STANDING EXERCISE FOR SPINAL STRENGTH

UTILIZE THE FOLLOWING TO IMPROVE ACUPUNCTURE RESULTS FOR MANY  
TYPES OF BACK AND NECK PROBLEMS

If you are having spinal/back problems, this standing technique can help you to open the spine, which allows for better circulation and stability to promote healing. Even if you do not have any back concerns, by standing and breathing in this posture, you will strengthen the spinal column and avoid future problems from developing. If done on a daily basis, the spine will align and stabilize and become much stronger and flexible than you could have imagined! All this just by standing properly!

What follows are the basic instructions for what is known as “wu chi posture,” which translates to “empty posture,” in the tai chi system. This posture will help you to regain a sense of center and stability that, unfortunately, can quite easily be lost!

**Step 1:** First, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Make sure both feet are facing directly forward and are not turned outward or inward at all. Relax. Find your center of gravity. Make sure your weight is evenly distributed and centered. Breathe! Try to breathe so that you expand your diaphragm and expand the lower abdomen when you breathe. This will help to build your sense of a center of gravity.

**Step 2:** Once you have found a reasonable center, with your feet shoulder width apart bend your knees slightly. The knees should not bend past the toes. Your knees should be in perfect alignment with your feet.

**Step 3:** Once the feet and knees are in alignment, make sure that the shoulders are aligned with the hips. This is a crucial point in this standing exercise. The hips need to be in direct alignment with the shoulders so the spine can straighten, center and open up. While standing in this balanced way, tilt the pelvis to help to open up the lumbar spine and keep the hips in direct alignment with the shoulders. This tends to be confusing for some, so to clarify... Instead of having a hollow area in the lumbar region that forms a curve similar to the bottom part of the letter “S” we want to straighten that lower “S” curve so that it is straight. This is done by tilting the pelvis up ward and forward. Imagine that you are pulling the two points at the front of your hips in line with your navel to wards the abdomen and you are pulling the pelvic floor upward. This motion will straighten and release the lumbar spine while you are standing in alignment.

**Step 4:** Once the pelvis is tilted upward, the lumbar spine is “open” and straight and the shoulders are in alignment with the hips. Then it is time to straighten the neck (cervical spine). This is done by drawing the chin in towards the throat. So in order to form perfect alignment and open the spine, do not hold the chin away from the neck, draw it inward.

**Step 5:** The arms hang relaxed by your sides. Now you should feel that the spine is in solid alignment. To emphasize this, you can imagine that as you tuck the chin in to straighten the cervical spine a thread is drawing the crown of the head up to the heavens and a cord is drawing you into the earth from your perineum (pelvic floor). Imagine your feet become roots and draw you further into the earth all the while this “heavenly thread” is pulling you upward. Play with this imagery and combine the stretching and pulling imagery with the breath. This subtle interplay will help to open the spine further and relax the spinal chord.

As you can see this is quite a simple exercise, but done regularly for 10-30 minutes a day it can help strengthen and open the spine to aid in the treatment or prevention of any and all spinal pains and tensions.

This standing method is applicable for a number of spinal problems:

- Herniated disc issues: If one works to open up the lumbar spine physically and maintain the posture daily with the “wu chi stance” it will serve to release pressure from the discs that are bulging. The same goes for any spinal compressions/herniations in the cervical spine at the neck. By doing the breathing and elongating techniques, pressure will lessen on the discs themselves. As a result, pressure and compression issues of all sorts can be relieved.
- Simple low back pain or neck tension (without an actual physical abnormality) may also be assisted via the same mechanics as above. In fact, it would help more so if the problem is not as far advanced as an actual herniation/compression.
- Patients with scoliosis would respond well also. Any curvature of the spine will be affected in a positive way with the “wu chi posture.”

*Nothing in this document is intended as a substitute for your doctor's diagnosis and/or treatment. This statement has not been evaluated by the FDA.*