



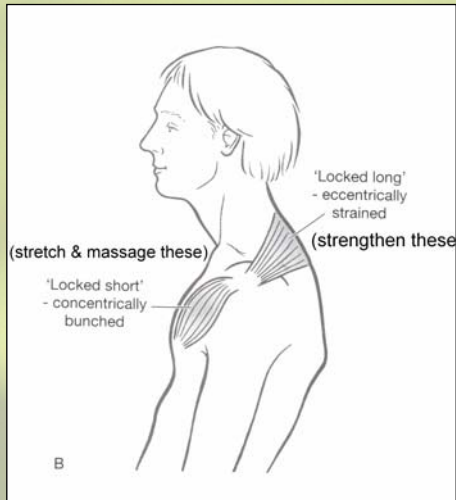
241 Clarence St.
Ottawa, ON K1N 5P9

(613) 302-3117

leeann@SolomonMassage.com

TIGHT! LONG OR SHORT? SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

In my June newsletter, I wrote briefly about our development in utero in the fetal position, and how the human body tends to naturally curl into flexion throughout life. This month I'll be expanding on this idea, as well as the concept of "tight-long" and "tight-short" muscles.



When a normally developed baby is born, the entire spine is concaved forward. As the newborn develops, the curves of the spine change as he begins to hold his own head, starts to crawl, and graduates to standing and walking. Human beings go through 2 major growth spurts: one at a very young age, and another when they're in adolescence. Because the second one happens so rapidly, the teen may appear ungainly and this is where poor postural habits are likely to occur (slouching!), especially if they're feeling self-conscious. Maintaining correct posture requires strong flexible muscles that are easily adaptable to environmental change, as they are continually working against gravity to keep the body upright. People who sit or stand for long periods often have poor posture because it's inevitable to get fatigued and begin slouching. The issue is exacerbated by living a sedentary lifestyle outside of the working or classroom environment. In addition, the way our bodies are designed, a lot of our physical power is generally in flexion because of leverage. If you weight train, you might notice that you're easily 30%

stronger in movements of flexion than extension ie: hams vs quads. Flexion indicates bending or decreasing the angle between two body parts (or bones), bringing them closer to each other. For example:

- Curling the fingers into a fist as in carrying grocery bags
- Bending the arm at the shoulder and elbow, as in picking up a child or large heavy object
- Moving the chest towards the knees in bending at the waist (supine = a sit-up; seated = bending over to put on or tie shoes)
- Bending the head & neck downwards to read or watch what we're doing with our hands (washing dishes, doing food preparation, etc)

The attached illustration shows a situation that I battle with in my own posture daily: because I work with my arms out in front all day and exert force through them, I'm tight-short in the pecs (or locked short as the pic says). The opposing weaker muscle groups have no choice but to follow, and so that unattractive forward bunching of the shoulder results in the upper back being pulled tight-long. Tight-long muscles are usually where we feel sore and achey and what we want massaged, but haven't you had the experience of feeling pretty much the same when you leave that massage by the same night or next day? Isn't that frustrating? I know having the pectorals and armpits massaged can be painful, but it is very effective in giving substantial and longer term relief.

Slouching, gravity, excessive flexion in life - what else can one do to combat these things?! Personally, I try to stretch my pecs and rotator cuffs often (and have them massaged out on occasion), and I focus my weight training on strengthening the muscles in my back so they'll be better able to counterbalance the pull of the front.

In the spirit of sharing things that work for me, I want to let you know about a new osteopath in town. They're typically quite booked up for months in advance, and since Dominick is new to Ottawa, he's still relatively easy to book with. After I saw him this week, I found that the persistent & perpetual tightness in my left neck and shoulder were gone and I could sleep on my left side that night without feeling like my spine was crooked. He did, in fact, say that my spine was crooked! Osteopathy is an effective, gentle and safe method of diagnosing and treating musculoskeletal problems. Find out more about Dominick Hussey and his services at <http://www.theallergyco.com>