

Text Neck: Is it a New Term for Physiotherapist?

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Introduction

Electronic gadgets are indispensable part of our life which has reached every doorstep across the globe. Gadgets consist of online simplified applications that make work easy which helps in better social connectivity. We have grown so used to it that it becomes really tough for us to think of daily life chores in the absence of devices. No one around the world is untouched by the technologies, even in rural areas one can see a far below middle class person having smartphone and all other types of luxury goods. We all are taking a lot of interest in these goods as it is used for social, entertainment, booking cab, track destination and various purposes. Sole reasons being addicted is consumerism, and betterment of life with these goods.

Incidence and Causes

Of the 6 billion people in the world, over 4 billion have mobile phones. Texting has become the dominant form of communication. As per statistical information 25% of the populations in India are using phones. Expecting this data may increase in to 32%. But 2010 it was only 3%. (Resource @ statsica). Almost half of mobile users are younger than 25 years., 40% of smart phone users from 18 to 25 years of age group. India will be a leading catalyst in this tremendous

technological push, as it will overtake USA to become world's second largest Smartphone market with 200 million+ users. Excessive usage of smart phones will cause various health issues in the body. The very well known health issues are Radiation hazard, Typing hazard, and vision hazard.

The most common posture adapted to use mobile phones is head down position. It's easily found in people travelling in buses, trains, malls and every other place as most of them are hunched on smartphone. Netizens a new term is given to these people who are addicted to internet. Poor posture can have detrimental effects on the physical body- head, neck, shoulder, affects mood, self concept and how others perceive you.

What is Text Neck?

Neck is an important structure which connects our body with head. It is surrounded by short and sensitive muscles all four sides. A term coined by US chiropractor Dr Dean L. Fishman, 'text neck' refers to overuse syndrome or a repetitive stress injury, where you have your head hung forward and down looking at your mobile electronic device for extended periods of time. Dr. Dean Fishman founded the Text Neck Institute in Plantation, Florida. Leading the way and breaking new ground, Dr. Fishman is a pioneer in treating technology related injuries.

Studies suggest that 79% of the population, ages 18-44, have their cell phones with them for 22 hours per day. 'Text neck', which can potentially affect millions worldwide, is a growing health concern. Smartphone users spend an average of two to four hours per day hunched over, reading e-mails, sending texts or checking social media sites. That's 700 to 1,400 hours per year people have undue stress on their spines, according to the research.

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Biomechanics and pathomechanics of Text Neck



The human head weighs about 10-12 pounds in neutral position. But as the neck bends forward and down, the weight on the cervical spine begins to increase and tension on the neck increases. At 15-degree angle, this weight is about 27 pounds, at 30 degrees it's 40 pounds, at 45 degrees it's 49 pounds, and at 60 degrees it's 60 pounds.

"Text neck" may lead to early wear and tear on your spine and early spinal degeneration. As you repeatedly pull and stretch this area, it may become inflamed over time, which can result in muscle strain, pinched nerves, herniated discs, and abnormalities

to your neck's natural curvature.

The symptoms associated with text neck are:

Symptoms associated	Possible ailments
Chronic headaches	Gastrointestinal ailments
upper back pain	Loss of lung capacity
Shoulder pain	Pinched nerve
Neck pain	Spine degeneration

How to treat Text Neck?

Prevention is better than cure. Regular feedback gives better outcome to improve and correct the posture. Instructions to patients to hold phones at

eye level as much as possible, advice to take breaks from their phones and laptops throughout the day and to practice good office ergonomics are applicable.

Physiotherapy Interventions

- Early screening and musculoskeletal evaluation - which helps to identify this condition in the acute stage and prevents the possible ailments.
- Postural correction
- Modification of aggravating factors
- Pain care by using therapeutic and hands on techniques
- Stretches - Regular neck muscle stretches which relax the tightened neck musculatures and relieves from the tension.
- Scapular stabilization exercises for postural control
- Neck exercise such as chin tucking, isometrics, etc
- Neck curve restorer
- Download text neck app (Head up protect your neck) for self correction while using smartphones
- Core strengthening exercises
- Strengthening - The muscles which are weak and causing neck instability.
- Patient education and counseling

“The weight seen by the spine dramatically increases when flexing the head forward at varying degrees. Loss of the natural curve of the cervical spine leads to incrementally increased stresses about the cervical spine. These stresses may lead to early wear, tear, degeneration, and possibly surgeries. (New York spine surgeon Kenneth Hansraj). Text neck is a

repetitive stress musculoskeletal disorder which affects frequent smart phone users in modern age. Efficient postural correction, proper knowledge, evaluation and ergonomics for neck should prevent this technology induced musculoskeletal disorder. As a health professional bother your neck same time bother your clients neck while examining and treating patients with neck pain. Physiotherapist role in text neck is to create awareness at earliest and advice to use a mobile phone in a proper ergonomics.

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