

A pain in the neck: Researcher studies the effects of too much texting on college students

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The world record for fastest text message typing is held by a 21-year old college student from Utah, but his dexterous digits could mean serious injury later on. Most adults aged 18-21 prefer texting over e-mail or phone calls, and ergonomics researchers are starting to wonder whether it's putting the younger generation at risk for some overuse injuries - once reserved for older adults who have spent years in front of a computer.

Judith Gold, an assistant professor of Epidemiology at the College of Health Professions and Social Work, thinks this might be the case. At this year's annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, she presented preliminary research which suggested that among college students, the more they texted, the more pain they had in their neck and shoulders.

"What we've seen so far is very similar to what we see with office workers who've spent most of their time at a computer," said Gold, who directs the Ergonomics and Work Physiology Laboratory. "The way the body is positioned for texting - stationary shoulders and back with rapidly moving fingers - is similar to the position for typing on a computer."

Text messaging is a fairly new technology, Gold says, so this is a new area of research among ergonomists. "But given the similarities in [body](#)

[position](#), findings from research on overuse injuries from computers could be applicable here," she said.

Current studies on computer use show office workers are prone to carpal tunnel syndrome, bursitis, and tendonitis.

In Gold's lab, she and her team use tools like infrared cameras, motion analysis and [heart rate](#) monitors to study the body's position in several job-related simulations. But given the prevalence of text messaging among [young adults](#), Gold wants to delve further into the [physiological effects](#) of this latest form of communication.

"Looking around our campus, you see every student on their cell phones, typing away," she said. "It's the age group that texts the most, so it's important to know what the health effects may be to learn whether it will cause long term damage."

Source: Temple University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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