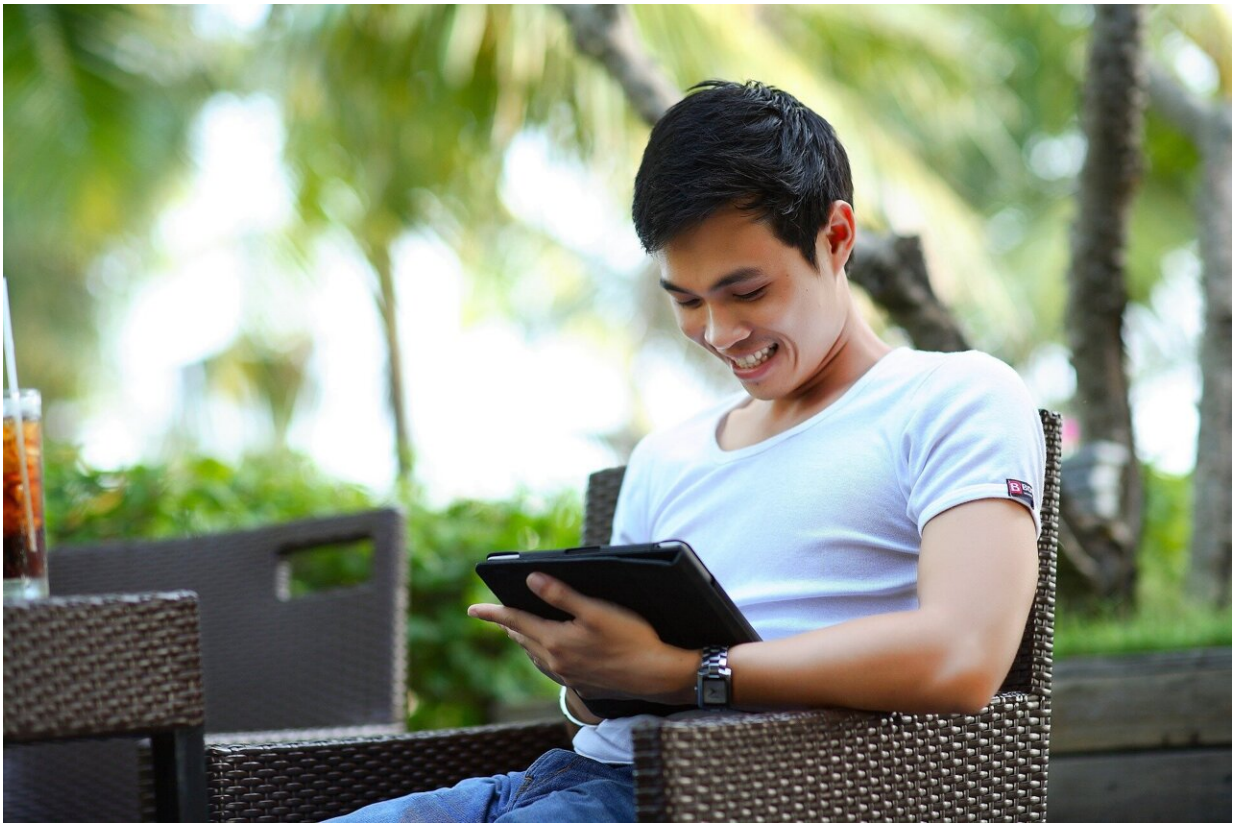


All that texting and scrolling leads to a rise in 'tech neck'

February 15 2023



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Technology can be a pain in the neck, leading to what's known as "tech neck," chronic pain that results from prolonged use of mobile phones, tablets, and other electronic devices.

Americans spend an average of more than five hours a day on their mobile phones and even more hours staring at laptops and computer screens. The repetitive strain on the bones, nerves, and muscles caused by looking down at a device can result in muscle stiffness, joint inflammation, pinched nerves, arthritis, and even bone spurs or herniated disks.

"Humans are upright creatures, and our bodies aren't designed to look down for long periods of time, which puts extra pressure on the cervical spine," said Kavita Trivedi, D.O., Associate Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Associate Medical Director of the Spine Center at UT Southwestern Medical Center. Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation is part of UTSW's Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute.

The typical adult head weighs 10 to 12 pounds, but bending it forward at a 45-degree angle—not unusual when looking at a cellphone—increases the amount of force on the neck to nearly 50 pounds.

"With repetition, that force can strain or injure the facet joints that connect our vertebrae. When that happens, the surrounding muscles naturally tighten up to protect nearby nerves, which leads to inflammation, pain, and knots in your neck—what is often referred to as tech neck," Dr. Trivedi said.

Nonsurgical treatments include medication and [physical therapy](#), trigger point and [steroid injections](#), nerve blocks, and minimally invasive techniques such as radiofrequency ablation.

"The good news is that most patients with tech neck don't require [surgery](#), and we have a wide range of therapies that can be very effective. There's no need to live with pain if it can be treated," Dr. Trivedi said.

If you don't currently have neck pain, take steps to protect yourself. Holding your phone at eye level as much as possible can help reduce the strain on your neck and possibly prevent future issues.

"Our phones and tablets are valuable tools, and there's no need to give them up," Dr. Trivedi said. "The solution is to learn how to prevent [tech neck](#) while using these devices, and if pain develops, see a specialist who can help."

Provided by UT Southwestern Medical Center

Citation: All that texting and scrolling leads to a rise in 'tech neck' (2023, February 15) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-02-texting-scrolling-tech-neck.html>

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