

TECHNOLOGY-RELATED

ACHES AND PAINS & North East Physiotherapy



Have you considered what the technology boom is doing to our students' posture?



Advice on Going digital

We live in a switched on world, but as well as making our life easier and more interesting new technology has some hidden dangers. There are a multitude of potential traps for users.

Whether using the internet, a laptop, the mobile phone, or just playing electronic games, we need to take care not to overdo it and make sure that we are not putting our bodies at risk.

Internet

The internet opens up the world, but it is easy to lose track of time and find that we have been staring at the screen for hours as we surf the net. This means that neck, shoulder, and back pain may be lurking. Holding the body in a rigid position produces aches and pains that can lead to long term problems if habits are not changed. It is also important to make sure that posture is preserved with the height of the chair, desk, and computer screen matched to the user. For home use it may be a good idea to make sure that, as well as having an adjustable chair, there is a footstool for younger and smaller users so that their feet are not dangling and their circulation is not affected.

Laptops

Laptops are not meant to sit on our laps! Hunched over using a laptop on the lap or twisted into an awkward position using it on an unsuitable surface produces neck and back strain after a very short time. And even when the laptop sits on a desk, it is often not at the correct height so we have to bend our necks to see the screen properly, and the keyboard is at an uncomfortable angle resulting in neck, wrist, and arm strain. The portability of the laptop is a great advantage, but physiotherapists urge you to think twice before you set it up just anywhere. A little care can prevent continuing problems.

Mobile phones

Texting is fun and a cheap way to stay in touch. But physiotherapists have seen a dramatic rise in thumb problems over the past few years. Hours spent texting at high speed without a break add up to strain of the thumb joint and sometimes damage to the muscles and ligaments involved. Some serial texters need to wear thumb splints or even to keep their arm in a sling until the acute pain subsides. Slowing down when texting will help avoid trouble, as will texting for no more than 10 minutes at a time.

Gaming

Depending on the setup, gaming provides the opportunity to damage your neck, back, arm, wrist, and thumbs all at once! Controllers are often held out from the body, producing strain on your arms and neck, and once again the thumbs are in the firing line if care is not taken about how games are played. Children adopt awkward postures when gaming and this simply adds to the potential for serious damage. Parents should encourage children not to overdo the time spent gaming. If you or your children are suffering aches and pains that are possible symptoms of overuse, it might be a good idea to ask North East Physiotherapy to check it out. Catching a problem early is the best cure.

Top tips for digital users

- When using a laptop or when gaming, take a break and do some neck and shoulder stretches every 20 minutes.
- Take frequent breaks from the computer. Get up and move around. Don't sit for more than an hour at a time.
- Try to connect your laptop to a monitor placed at the correct height, and use a full sized mouse (cordless, if possible) and keyboard, or angle the laptop on a laptop stand to give a more ergonomic viewing angle.
- Provide a safe set up, and try to encourage children to adopt safe postures when using the new technologies.



For more information, or for posture assessment and advice, contact **North East Physiotherapy on 03 57 221424**