

Text Neck - Keep your head up

'Text Neck' is a term used to describe the pain and postural strain associated with having the neck and upper back flexed forward for extended periods of time while used a hand held device. Holding the head in this position places excessive strain on the neck and upper back musculature and can contribute to neck and upper back pain, as well as headaches.

Of course postural strain from looking down is not a new thing - we have been looking down for many years, however the use of devices means we are in the flexed position for longer periods, and from a younger age.

Research published by Dr. Kenneth Hansraj, chief of spine surgery at New York Spine Surgery and Rehabilitation Medicine, found the forward position adopted when staring down at your phone can put incredible pressure on your neck. Flexing your head forward 15 degrees places an additional 7kg of stress on the neck. Increasing this angle to 60 degrees increases the stress to 27kgs – that's like carrying around a 6 year old on your neck!

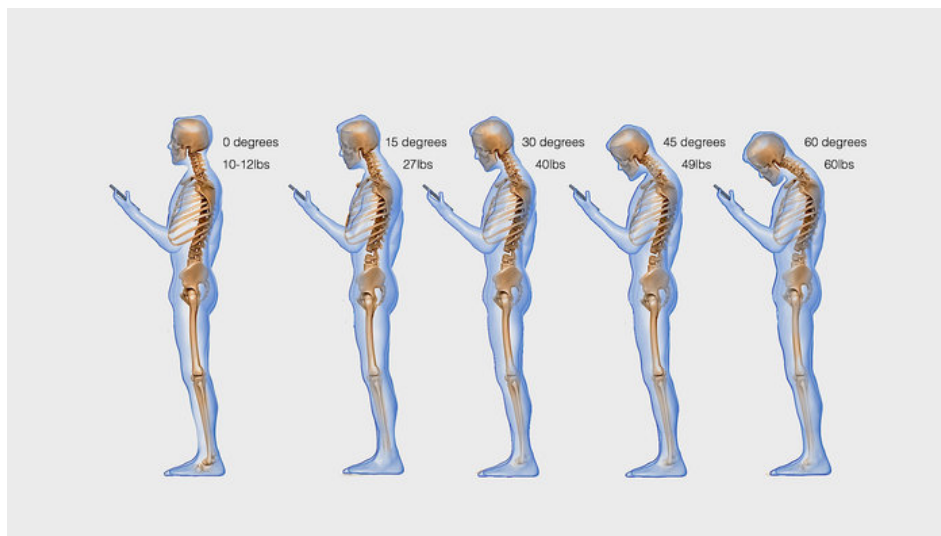
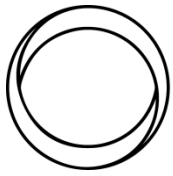


Image courtesy of Dr. K. Hansraj

What can you do?

- Hold your phone at eye level
- Make sure other screens, i.e. computer monitors, are at eye level
- Take regular breaks
- Seek treatment if you are experiencing pain or require further advice
- - Use the following exercises to improve neck mobility and strength:



Text Neck - Exercises

1. Lie on a rolled up towel/foam roller

Aim: extend the upper back, open the front of the ribcage and decrease postural strain.

How: Lie on your back on the floor, positioning the towel vertically along the spine between the shoulder blades. Let your shoulders drop back over the towel with your arms by your side. Lie for 5-10 minutes at the end of each day or as required. Change the positioning of your arms to accentuate the stretch in different regions – arms out to the side (as shown in the picture) will be felt across the mid back, arms above your head will be felt in the upper back.

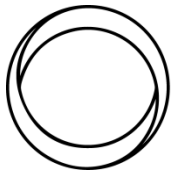
If discomfort is noted in the lower back, bend the knees. If discomfort is noted in the neck, place a small pillow under the head. If discomfort persists then discontinue the exercise.



2. Pectoralis stretch

Aim: release tightness of the pectoralis muscle that becomes shortened from the forward posture.

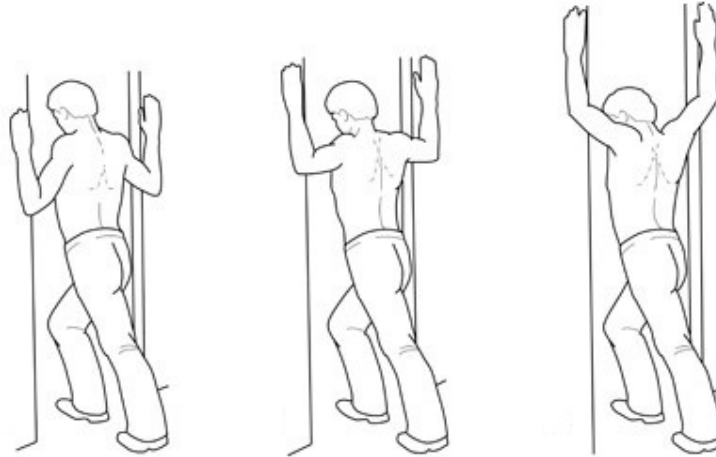
How: Stand in a doorway with your forearms against the doorframe and your elbows at shoulder height. Place one foot forward, to avoid pressure on the lower back and gently lean into the doorway. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds. Perform this stretch three to four times a day. The height of the elbows will stretch different parts of the pectoralis muscle.



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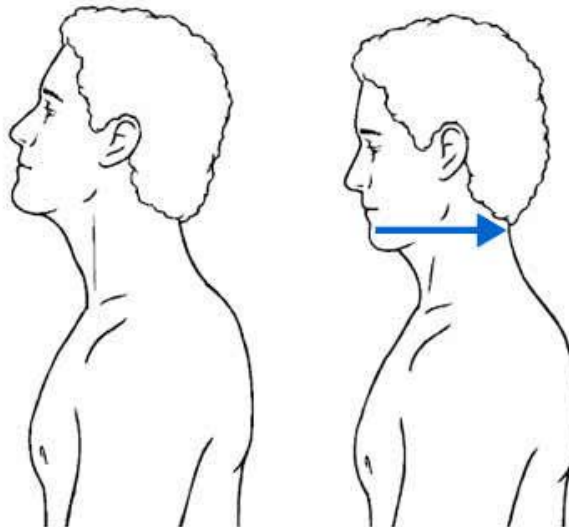
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3. Chin tucks

Aim: strengthen the neck muscles to decrease the forward position of the head

How: Stand up tall against the wall, keeping the head in a neutral position. Gently draw your head and chin back, like you're making a double chin. Hold for 10 seconds. Perform 5 - 10 reps. Perform regularly throughout the day.



4. Mobilise the neck

Aim: increase the range of motion of the neck.

How: Take the head through all ranges of motion. Rotation left to right. Tilting left, tilting right. Looking up and down. Perform 10 times in each direction slowly and controlled.