

## **Got a Case of Tech Neck? Neck Strain Causes, Symptoms, and Natural Relief**



Ever watch a pre-PC era movie and ask yourself: How were these people possibly doing any productive business with just pen and paper. No laptops? Not even a desktop...?

The good news is that time has proven that even those pre-tech eras kept our world going. But the bad news is that, although tech has made our world so much more

productive, the excessive usage of screens has resulted in people sitting for much longer, statically, staring at their screens. And this reality takes its toll, physically, with the first “victim” being the neck. This “neck abuse” has a trendy name: **Tech neck**.

Tech neck may be more prevalent right now, as most of us are stuck working from home at what may not be ideal workstations. Continue reading to learn a bit more about what causes this problem and how you can go about fixing it.

## What is Tech Neck and How is it Caused?



Tech neck happens when we spend too much time with our head and neck extended too far forward over our body while looking at a computer screen.

It can also happen when people repeatedly tuck their heads down over their chins and hunch their shoulders while sending or receiving text messages on a cell phone.

The prolonged effect of this pressure can cause pain in the muscles, ligaments, vertebrae and discs in the neck and upper thoracic regions.

## Tech Neck Symptoms and Diagnosis

Neck and shoulder pain are most common, but upper back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and migraines or headaches may also indicate the tech neck condition.

But if we look at the most common indications of tech neck, those that doctors use to diagnose this condition, we'll find:

**Stiff or painful neck.** A major symptom caused by having your neck in a downward position for lengthy times looking at your laptop or cell phone. This posture puts additional load on the spine.

**Shoulder pain.** Hunching over your keyboard or hunching your shoulders when texting? That's a major cause of shoulder pain.

**Headaches.** Tilting your head down to read the display of your cellphone or too far forward while reading your computer monitor? That's a great way to get yourself recurring, sometimes debilitating, headaches.

**Tingling or numb thumbs.** Our thumbs do the heavy lifting when it comes to texting. If you are hunching over your phone while texting, you are pinching the nerves leading down the arms to the hands and fingers, which can cause numbness.

**Dry eyes and blurry vision.** Staring at screens or displays for a prolonged period of time can lead to blurry vision. Additionally, you probably never thought about it, but when you are focused on tasks on your computer, you blink much less. And that causes dry eyes, which can result in blurriness as well. As a result of blurry vision, people tend to hunch forward even further, adding salt to injury.

## So How Can We Mitigate the Tech Neck Risk?



Posture, posture, posture. On a higher level, our screens and displays make us adopt postures that are unhealthy, unnatural, and that create excessive weight burden on our necks.

Our head naturally already has its own weight. Every additional angle forward we tilt it and bend our neck, the greater the head's weight

becomes.

In other words, the more sharply we look down, the more our heads move forward, shifting the natural center of gravity. Such a posture negatively affects the spine and even our hips.

Some tips to avoid the dreaded tech neck include:

- Always be aware of how you hold your phone and hold it in a way that minimizes the amount of tilting you do with your head. Also, gentle neck stretches once in a while can help.
- Give your shoulders a break and stretch them occasionally. Add to that some forward and backward shoulders rolls.
- Lift your phone to eye level and adjust your computer's monitor to eye level, as well.
- Shake your hands and wiggle your fingers from time to time. Add to that some gentle wrist rolls.

- Take a 5-10 minute eye-break once in a while. Look around to shift some focus. Eye lubrication is also useful. Oh, and an eye-break doesn't mean fiddling with your cell phone while waiting to go back your main monitor.

An ergonomic workstation is also key to preventing any tech neck implications. Make sure your at-home set up is comfortable, keeping your computer screen level with your eyes and utilize a comfortable chair that helps prevent neck and shoulder pain.

You could also consider creating a standing workstation, which relieves pressure on the body and can help with many tech neck symptoms. At home, you can create this using a dresser, bookshelf or even your kitchen counter. This provides the additional benefit of burning more calories throughout the day, because you burn more calories standing than you do sitting.

While we may be stuck working from home at the moment, don't let a sore neck keep you from getting the job done.

