

The Trouble with Tech Neck



The Trouble with Tech Neck (and What to Do About It)

First came tennis elbow. Then there was carpal tunnel syndrome. The latest on a list of repetitive movement-related ailments is “tech neck.” What is this malady and what can be done about it, specifically in schools where the curriculum is increasingly tech-focused? Here’s a closer look at the new health threat with the greatest impact on our nation’s young people:

What Is Tech Neck?

Americans collectively check their smartphones more than nine billion times a day, [according to a study from Deloitte](#). Not surprisingly, many of the screen-obsessed are children, and all of this looking up and down at devices all day comes at a cost.

The condition caused by staring down at devices is called tech neck (also known as “text neck”). The human head weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of 11 to 12 pounds, and the act of holding it faced down and out from the body it puts additional and unnatural pressure on the cervical spine. According to a [calculation](#) published by the Surgical Technology International journal, angling the head 15 degrees forward adds adds 15 to 17 pounds of pressure to the neck. At the usual 60-degree angle of the head when engaged in texting or staring at a handheld device, a whopping 60 pounds of force is exerted on the head. Amplified across extreme use and over time, this weight can result in poor posture, wear-and-tear on the spine, spinal degeneration, and the eventual need for surgical intervention.

As Kenneth Hansraj, chief of spine surgery at New York Spine Surgery and Rehabilitation Medicine, [told The Washington Post](#), “It is an epidemic or, at least, it’s very common. Just look around you, everyone has their heads down.”

Even worse, says Hansraj? “The problem is really profound in young people. With this excessive stress in the neck, we might start seeing young people needing spine care. I would really like to see parents showing more guidance.” However, even if parents limit screen time and teach their children to view devices at eye level, how can school leaders ensure screen time during the school day doesn’t undermine those efforts?

Treating Tech Neck

There are several ways to mitigate the impact of screens and lower the risk of tech neck. At the top of the list is ergonomic equipment, such as tablet holders. As tech neck expert [Dr. Jeff Manning told WFAA-TV Dallas](#), “There are many [tablet stands] on the market, but all have the common goal of securing the tablet at a height that is designed to reduce your need to keep your head bent down and forward. Keeping your device at eye-level will help to reduce neck pain and possible damage.”

A number of other adaptive technology, including everything from voice dictation apps to external keyboards, helps prevent head-forward posture and stop the development of tech neck.

Schools and teachers can also help counter the effects of tech neck by integrating regular technology breaks into the school day, and by incorporating exercises which stretch, strengthen and support good posture. Schools can also invest in innovative work stations, including the [Luxor desk](#), standing desks or converters to turn regular desks into standing desks, and tablet stands. Be sure to research the best products for your students and your budget, as not all are created equal.

Engage Students

One last thing to keep in mind? While adaptive devices are a useful tool in the fight against tech neck, they’re only part of the solution. Equally if not more important? Awareness. After all, the more kids understand about the very real dangers of excessive screen use, the better prepared they’ll be to enact healthy change on their own.

Beating Tech Neck at Your School

Troxell Communications is not just a technology vendor; we are a company invested in partnerships with schools to offer students the technology that gives them the greatest head start in this increasingly technology filled world. We want the best for students and staff in your school, which is why we offer a range of products that combat tech neck. Talk to your local Troxell rep today about what options are available to you. Your students, your staff, and your neck will thank you!