

# HEADS UP ON TECH NECK



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AUSTRALIAN  
CHIROPRACTORS  
ASSOCIATION



## Factsheet

# Heads Up On Tech Neck for Parents

## What is tech neck?

Tech neck is the informal term used to describe Tension Neck Syndrome (TNS), a spine related musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) also referred to as 'text neck' that's common in children and young people.

## Too much screen time can cause tech neck in children and young people.

Tech neck is a worldwide public health problem. Studies show that tech neck is often caused by incorrect or overuse of mobile phones and other electronic devices including tablets and computers.

When children and young people spend too much time with their head bent forward reading from phones or tablets, the greater the impact on their spine. Incorrect, non-ergonomic postural habits and poor setup of laptops or desktop computers can also lead to children and young people developing tech neck.

Movements such as bending the head, neck, and shoulders when using smartphones and portable devices, and distorting the neck position while sitting, studying, gaming or watching television, can progressively increase stress on the cervical spine.

*It's recommended that parents and carers limit screen time in accordance with the Australian Institute of Family Studies guidelines and keep children and young people active to maximise their physical and mental development, spinal health and overall health and wellbeing.*

## What is the impact of tech neck on children and young people?

Tech neck symptoms include headaches, neck, shoulder and upper back pain. Tech neck can also lead to postural problems and may cause changes to the natural curve of the spine. Data has shown a worldwide increase in tech neck among children and adolescents who spend a lot of time with their heads bent over devices. This practice puts stress on their cervical spine which can result in various complications, such as poor posture, premature wear, lacerations, spinal degeneration, possible surgery, medical and psychological conditions as well as developmental and social complications.

*Minimise the risk of tech neck to maximise long-term spinal health in children and adolescents.*

## Why is too much screen time bad for children and young people's cervical spine?

Academic studies show prolonged and non-ergonomic use of mobile phones, tablets and computers can increase pressure on the cervical spine leading to tech neck. Awareness of how to properly use these devices, the importance of minimising the frequency and duration of use, can play a major role in preventing tech neck. Children and young people should avoid incorrect, non-ergonomic posture when using smart devices and computers and maintain good posture, take frequent breaks at regular intervals and do stretching exercises.

## How to prevent tech neck in children and young people.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies\* screen time guidelines recommend NO screen time for 2 years and under; NO more than 1 hour per day for children aged 2 to 5 years, and NO more than 2 hours of sedentary recreational screen time for 5 to 17-year-olds (excluding school work).

*Good posture, taking regular breaks to move and stretch, combined with exercise can help minimise tech neck caused from injuring the cervical spine when using mobile phones, tablets or computers incorrectly.*

## ACA's top tips for tech neck prevention among children and young people.

1. **ENSURE THEY SIT WITH COMFORTABLE UPRIGHT POSTURE** – Shoulders should be relaxed with feet flat on the floor.
2. **LIMIT SCREEN TIME** – Be a role model and follow the recommended\* screen times for their age.
3. **STOP BENDING THE NECK** – They should not look down at devices, instead hold them at eye level.
4. **USE BOTH HANDS** – They should hold with both hands and alternate between left and right when typing on a smart phone.
5. **STOP THEM WALKING WITH A PHONE** – Heads should be up straight and engaging with the world.
6. **TAKE REGULAR MOVEMENT BREAKS** – They should look away from their device, move their neck from side to side and stretch every 10 minutes if using mobile devices and every 30 minutes if using computers.
7. **SET UP COMPUTERS ERGONOMICALLY** – Ensure their monitor or laptop screen is at eye level.
8. **USE AN ADJUSTABLE ERGONOMIC OFFICE CHAIR** – Their knees should be slightly lower than their hips.
9. **GET MOVING** – Regular exercise helps maintain a healthy spine and overall health and wellbeing.
10. **CONSULT AN ACA CHIROPRACTOR** to limit and treat spinal health problems including tech neck.

*ACA provides a range of free helpful resources to help minimise tech neck including the Ergonomic Checklist, Using Mobile Device Checklist and the Stand Corrected Stretching Poster.*

## Get the heads up on tech neck!

If you or your children suffer from tech neck, consult an ACA chiropractor for effective drug-free and low-risk treatment that is one of the most preferred treatment options for neck and back pain caused by tech neck.

## Consulting an ACA Chiropractor can help!

If you or a family member suffer from tech neck and are tired of spine-related pain impacting your life, adjust your thinking and consult an ACA chiro. ACA chiropractors are five-year university educated healthcare professionals who treat a range of musculoskeletal disorders including tech neck. They play a vital role in managing the spinal health of Australians of all ages by providing holistic, drug free healthcare that treats the cause of tech neck and not just the symptoms.

*ACA Chiropractors are Australia's leaders in chiropractic healthcare.  
Every week, more than 400,000 chiropractic consultations help everyday  
Australians maintain their spinal health and stand corrected.*

## How do ACA chiropractors treat tech neck?

Chiropractic healthcare can provide effective, drug-free treatment for pain caused by tech neck regardless of your age, profession or lifestyle. Using specialised non-surgical techniques including gentle spinal adjustments, various manual therapies and soft tissue techniques, ACA chiropractors can reduce tech neck pain, improve joint mobility, and reduce stiffness without the use of medication. ACA chiropractors offer advice on exercise to reduce the risk of tech neck and improve overall health and wellbeing in Australians of all ages. Consult an ACA chiropractor today to take back control of your spinal health and wellbeing by visiting [consultachiro.org.au](https://www.consultachiro.org.au).

Spinal Health Week is the Australian Chiropractors Association's flagship campaign aimed at educating Australians about the importance of maintaining positive spinal health. Look for the ACA member logo at your local chiropractic clinic or to locate an ACA chiropractor near you, visit

[spinalhealthweek.org.au](https://www.spinalhealthweek.org.au)

For a full list of references, visit [chiro.org.au/references](https://www.chiro.org.au/references)