



Is your phone a pain in the neck?

Widespread use of smart phones and tablets is becoming increasingly common in our lives.



A recent Australian study found that text messaging is the most addictive digital service, equivalent in addictiveness to cigarette smoking. With this increasing use of technology comes a serious and harmful condition known as ‘text neck’. ‘Text neck’ otherwise identified as a condition caused by prolonged periods of forward neck flexion, is becoming a global epidemic leading to permanent damage to the spine and a leading cause of neck pain.

Researchers have found that smartphone users are spending on average around four hours a day with their necks in the forward flexed position staring at their device, resulting in over 1,400 hours a year. Three things generally occur when we drop our heads into forward flexion:

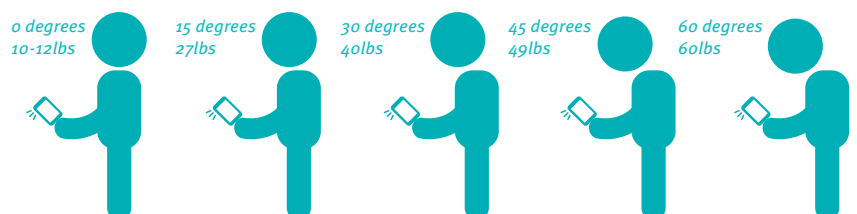
- ▶ The neck moves forward into flexion
- ▶ Shoulders lift towards your ears
- ▶ Neck and shoulder muscles contract

Our spines are designed to support the weight of our head and body when in an upright position, however, when using devices such as smart phones individuals will bend their neck anywhere from 20 - 60 degrees. When the neck is bent forward the weight of the head is magnified from 4-6kg to around 27kg. Frequent and repetitive flexion of our heads is negatively impacting on our overall health. ‘Text neck’ is linked with emotional and behavioural changes. Leading to anxiety and depression due to affecting the release of ‘happy hormones’ such as endorphins.

What can you do to prevent ‘text neck’?

To prevent the negative implications of ‘text neck’:

- ▶ Take frequent breaks at least every 20-30 minutes while using your device
- ▶ Hold or align the device at eye level to prevent forward flexion of the head
- ▶ Pay attention to posture when texting or using any other device
- ▶ Do some exercises that stretch and strengthen surrounding muscles, including the neck and chest



Health checks for men

(Men's Health Week 13th - 19th June 2016)

Average life expectancy for males is 80 years, 5 years less than the life expectancy for females. (Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014)

A health check is an examination of your current state of health. The aim of a health check is to help find, prevent or lessen the effect of health issues. It is like getting your car serviced regularly so it does not break down. Health checks and staying well should be part of every man's regular routine.

- ▶ **Skin checks** – 95% of skin cancers can be treated successfully if detected early. You should check your skin for unusual moles or freckles regularly. See your doctor if you notice anything unusual. Men at high risk (for example, those who work outdoors) need a yearly examination by their doctor or dermatologist.
- ▶ **Dental care** – you can reduce your risk of tooth decay, gum disease and tooth loss if you clean your teeth regularly and eat a low-sugar diet. Visit the dentist at least once a year for a dental examination and a professional clean.
- ▶ **Blood pressure** – men over 40 with a personal or family history of high blood pressure, stroke or heart attack, should have their blood pressure checked annually. If you are aged under 40, there

is no family history of high blood pressure and if your blood pressure is normal have it checked every two years.

- ▶ **Cholesterol and blood glucose** – high levels of cholesterol and/or glucose contribute to your risk of developing heart disease and type 2 diabetes. If you are over 45, you should have your blood tested once every five years. If you are at high risk of cardiovascular disease or type 2 diabetes and have a family history, you should be tested every year from the age of 40.
- ▶ **Body composition tests** – being overweight is a significant risk factor for many health conditions, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Measuring your waist circumference is a simple check to see if you are carrying too much weight around your waistline. For most people, a waist measurement greater than 94cm for men and 80cm for women puts you at increased risk.
- ▶ **Bowel cancer** – bowel cancer screening generally involves a test for blood in the stool, which can be an early warning sign of bowel cancer. Screening is usually carried out through a faecal occult blood



test (FOBT) which involves a simple test that you can use at home and then send to a laboratory for analysis. If you are over 50, you should have this test once every two years, or after you turn 40 if you have a family history.

- ▶ **Prostate check** – prostate problems are very common in men over 40 years and these problems increase with age. If you notice any symptoms of prostate problems, such as getting up to urinate more than twice a night, having difficulty with the strength of your urine stream or with starting to urinate, speak to your GP.

Spicy Coconut and Lentil Soup

Serves 4

- ▶ 2 teaspoons peanut oil
- ▶ 1-2 tablespoons red curry paste
- ▶ 4 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- ▶ 2 cups coconut milk
- ▶ 4 kaffir lime leaves, shredded
- ▶ 1 cup red lentils
- ▶ 100g button mushrooms halved (or other interesting small/fine mushrooms)
- ▶ 125 g fresh or 1 x 400g can baby corn, drained and halved
- ▶ 80 g snow peas or sugar snap peas

Method:

Place oil and curry paste in saucepan over medium to low heat and cook for 2 mins. Add the stock, coconut milk, lime leaves and lentils to the pan and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add mushrooms, corn and peas to the soup and simmer for 3 minutes or until the peas are tender.



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