



Texters Beware: Too Much Texting Linked to Neck and Shoulder Pain

Preliminary research on college students in the US suggests that too much texting can lead to neck and shoulder pain, similar to that found in older adults who develop injuries from prolonged and repeated use of computers.

Judith Gold, an ergonomics researcher at Temple University in Philadelphia, presented the preliminary findings of her study at this year's annual meeting of the American Public Health Association.

Gold, who directs the Ergonomics and Work Physiology Laboratory at Temple University, told the press that texting is probably doing for this generation of young adults aged 18 to 21 what years in front of a computer did for older adults: it is putting them at risk of serious injury. "What we've seen so far is very similar to what we see with office workers who've spent most of their time at a computer," said Gold. Current studies of people who sit for long periods at computers, such as office workers, show they are prone to carpal tunnel syndrome, bursitis, and tendonitis.

Gold said text messaging is a new technology, and a new area of ergonomics research, but given the similarities in the way the body is positioned for texting, "stationary shoulders and back with rapidly moving fingers", findings from research on overuse injuries from computers could also apply to texters.

In her preliminary research, Gold found that among college students, the more they texted, the more pain they experienced in their neck and shoulders. She and her team use infrared cameras, motion analysis and heart rate monitors to study the body's position in several job-related simulations. She now wants to explore further the physiological effects of text messaging.

"Looking around our campus, you see every student on their cell phones, typing away," said Gold. "It's the age group that texts the most, so it's important to know what the health effects may be to learn whether it will cause long term damage," she added.

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