

Cell Phone Slump

People are using cell phones in greater amounts than ever before. While there is the benefit of convenience and portability, many people don't realize the impact that excessive use can take on their bodies. In addition to the overuse and posture related injuries, there are greater risks such as not being aware of your surroundings while walking, along with distracted driving. It is vital to remember the associated ergonomic risks using cell phones and what steps to take to avoid possible injuries.

The posture that majority of people while using a cell phone is slouched/slumped, an unnatural one that can lead to pain. Our bodies are not intended to remain in awkward positions while doing repetitive motions for extended time periods. On average, people spend two to four hours per day with their heads facing down towards their cell phones and other devices; this equates to 700 to 1,400 hours per year of excess stress on the neck area. When in a neutral position, the force on the neck area is 10-12 pounds; repetition of tilting your head forward increases the force, which can lead to neck problems, including wear and tear and degeneration. Some of the most common issues related to excessive cell phone use paired with poor ergonomics include thumb tendonitis, wrist tendonitis, cervical/thoracic/lumbar postural syndromes, and cervical/thoracic/lumbar disc bulges.

It is important to use correct posture and follow ergonomic guidelines. Alternate between using thumbs and other fingers while typing while remembering to use the pads of your fingers rather than the tip in to avoid awkward bent positions in your fingers. Hold your phone at eye level while maintaining a neutral grip on the phone. Take advantage of voice-to-text, auto complete tools, and use shortcuts to help reduce the amount of typing. Additionally, removing distractions such as social media and games helps to reduce amount of time spent on phone; try to designate time at a computer for these so you can have better ergonomic positioning. It is also important to remember to take breaks, like you would while working at computer, by periodically stopping typing/scrolling/etc., doing some gentle stretches for your spine, shoulders, wrist, hands, fingers and thumbs, and looking away from the screen to relax your eyes.

For more information on the Ergonomics Program, visit:

<http://www1.udel.edu/ehs/generalhs/indhygiene/ergonomics.html>

