Text Neck Syndrome

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Key points:

- Introduction
- Causes and Risk Factors
- Clinical Features (Symptoms)
- Complications
- Prevention and Awareness
- Conclusion

Introduction

Text neck syndrome is a repetitive strain injury caused by prolonged use of smartphones, tablets, and other handheld electronic devices while the neck is bent forward. This sustained posture places excessive stress on the cervical spine and surrounding muscles, leading to neck pain, reduced cervical range of motion, muscle weakness, and postural changes such as forward head posture and rounded shoulders. As screen time continues to increase, text neck syndrome has become an increasingly common musculoskeletal problem, particularly among adolescents and young adults.[1]



Figure 1: ***Text Neck Syndrome.***[1]

Causes

The most common causes and contributing factors of text neck syndrome include:

1) Prolonged use of smartphones, tablets, or other electronic devices
2) Excessive neck flexion while viewing screens
3) Forward head posture (FHP)
4) Slouching or rounded shoulder posture
5) Poor ergonomics and prolonged sitting
6) Inadequate sleeping posture or pillow support

Symptoms

Common symptoms of text neck syndrome include:

1) Neck pain and stiffness, especially after prolonged device use
2) Reduced range of motion of the neck
3) Pain radiating to the shoulders, upper back, or arms
4) Muscle weakness involving the neck and shoulder muscles
5) Tension-type headaches caused by tight suboccipital muscles
6) Rounded shoulders and forward head posture
7) Reduced cervical and upper thoracic mobility

8) Jaw pain or temporomandibular joint (TMJ) discomfort

If left untreated, persistent poor posture may contribute to degenerative changes of the cervical spine, including early arthritis, disc compression, disc herniation, and, in severe cases, nerve irritation or damage.[2]



Figure 2: *Neck Postures.*[2]

Complications

If left untreated, text neck syndrome may lead to long-term musculoskeletal problems. Potential complications include:

1) Loss or flattening of the normal cervical spinal curve
2) Early-onset cervical arthritis
3) Spinal misalignment
4) Degenerative changes of the cervical spine
5) Intervertebral disc compression
6) Disc herniation
7) Nerve irritation or compression, which may result in pain, numbness, or weakness in the upper limbs[2]

Awareness

Raising awareness about proper posture and healthy device habits is essential for preventing text neck syndrome. Individuals should be encouraged to limit continuous screen time, maintain the screen at eye level, take regular breaks, and perform stretching and strengthening exercises for the neck and shoulders. Early recognition of symptoms and ergonomic education can help reduce the risk of chronic pain and long-term musculoskeletal complications.[1,2]

Conclusion

Text neck syndrome has become an increasingly common musculoskeletal condition due to prolonged smartphone and electronic device use. It is associated with neck pain, postural abnormalities, and reduced physical function, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Preventive measures such as limiting screen time, maintaining good posture, and practicing proper ergonomics are essential to reduce its prevalence and improve long-term musculoskeletal health.[4]

References

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