



Effect of Smart Phone Addiction on Kids Posture and what we can do About it

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We all have heard that “*Sitting is the new Smoking*”, similarly I infer that “*Smart Phone is a new Dope*”.

With the coming of the Covid 19 Pandemic & the subsequent lockdowns, all of us were confined to our homes leading to minimal physical activity. This confinement affected kids the most, leading kids with not much to do on the physical activity given that the schools went into an online mode of teaching, where most of the kids were left with no option but to resort smart phones for entertainment and study. The screentime kept on increasing for most of the kids.

Excessive usage of smart phones has started showing its affects on kids posture. Prolonged device usage is resulting in faulty posture such as Forward Neck posture and Rounded Shoulders.

Sustained Forward Neck postures, the frequency of device use, the degree of neck flexion which using the device and the body position are some of the key factors associated with Neck and Shoulder pain, and its severity.

Long term forward head posture may also increase the risk of accelerated degenerative changes, increased pressure on the spine. Looking at the cervical spine when the degree of flexion increases, the force transmitted to the cervical spine increase. This increase force results in increase pain in the neck. If the neck continues to be in an improper position for a long period of time, some muscles remain in their lengthened position while some in their shortened position which causes a muscle imbalance. In turn this leads to neck pain & increased stress on the spine. When not paid attention to for a long time, the pain spreads to surrounding joints like shoulder and thoracic spine.

Maintaining an optimal posture with judicious use of the smart phone can help you prevent or manage the pain and postural malalignments.

Little efforts and changes to maintain a good postured and avoid pain. What little we can do

- Optimal postural re-education and specific exercises for neck and shoulder to be practiced.
- When using a phone while standing, raise the phone upto eye level to ensure that the cervical spine is in an optimal & the neck muscles are relaxed.
- When sitting sit upright with a proper back support and avoid slouching. Try to use a phone mount to keep the phone at an eye level. The neck and hands should be relaxed.
- Use phone’s voice dictation/voice commands, to minimize the typing effort.
- Setting the phone on Auto Brightness mode, helps reduce the strain on eyes.
- Minimize usage of phone on the bed or sofa.
- Take frequent breaks to relax your eyes and muscles.
- Incorporate exercises as part of your daily routine.

Lastly, I would like to stress the importance of physical activity in Sun Light (source of Vitamin -D) which is vital for kids, by limiting the usage of smart phones and encouraging outdoor activities, given that the Covid situation is much better now.