British Chiropractic Association

Practice 'safe texting' with The British Chiropractic Association

In December 2004, 2.4 billion SMS messages were sent in the UK alone – an increase of 26% from the previous year. As the nation's 'text' obsession continues, the British Chiropractic Association warns that users could be susceptible to RSI-type injuries.

Tim Hutchful, a chiropractor from the British Chiropractic Association says: "BCA chiropractors recognise that text messaging regularly, over a long period of time, could cause repetitive strain which may cause both short and long term injuries. As mobile phone technology develops, mobiles are getting smaller, with buttons closer together. Small, fine movements tend to aggravate more than larger movements - this coupled with the smaller buttons can lead to injury as smaller buttons are harder to activate.
When you are text messaging, you tend to hold your shoulders and upper arms tense. This cuts down the circulation to the forearm, when in fact it needs a greater than normal blood flow to achieve the fine movements of the thumbs and fingers".
The British Chiropractic Association recommends that the following exercises should be done before and after text messaging (and between individual messages if you are texting continuously over a long period):

Shoulder shrug

- Shrug your shoulders towards your ears. Hold for 2/3 seconds and then relax. Repeat 3 times.
- Because it's easier to relax a muscle after you've tightened it, you will relax the muscles in the shoulder, and allow the blood to flow into the arm.

Make a fist

- Hold your arm at right angles from the elbow. Make a fist and then tense it and the whole of your arm.
- Hold for 2/3 seconds, then relax and let the arm flop to your side.
- Repeat 3 times. This will help the blood flow and tone the muscles.

Wrist stretch

- Stretch the wrist backwards, hold for 2/3 seconds, then stretch it forwards and hold for 2/3 seconds. Repeat 3 times.
- When you are texting, you tilt your thumbs towards your wrists, so straining the tendons. This exercise prevents a tightening of the wrists.

Finger spread

- Spread the fingers as wide apart as you can, hold for 2/3 seconds; then bunch them into a fist and hold for 2/3 seconds. Repeat 3 times. This will keep your fingers and thumbs supple and mobile.

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Neck muscle stretch

Texting usually involves looking down at the phone which means the head is held unsupported, so it is helpful to the neck muscles to sit relaxed with the shoulders supported and to 'retract' the

- Try to make a double chin and to stretch the muscles at the base of the neck. Hold this position for 2 to 3 seconds and repeat 3 times.
- Always stretch very slowly.

These exercises are also very helpful for people who spend a lot of time on computer game consoles.

Other helpful advice

- Support your arm on a chair or table to take the 'load' off the neck and shoulder muscles
- Massage your arm from the wrist to the elbow at regular intervals
- Swap hands regularly
- Sit in a neutral upright position – head over shoulders and arms comfortably near the body
- The weight of a phone may not feel much, but it is significantly increased if the arm is held out stretched, as it will increase the load of muscles and joints

Chiropractors treat problems with your joints, bones and muscles, and the effects they have on your nervous system. Working on all the joints of your body, concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make gentle, specific adjustments (the chiropractic word for manipulation) to improve the efficiency of your nervous system and release your body's natural healing ability. Chiropractic does not involve the use of any drugs or surgery.

The information here is guidance and you should consult a BCA chiropractor or other healthcare professional for further specific advice if you are experiencing pain, have an existing injury or other medical condition.

For more information or to find a BCA chiropractor in your area:

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Like medical practitioners and dentists, all chiropractors are registered by law. Members of the British Chiropractic Association (BCA) are registered with the UK regulator, the General Chiropractic Council and the association only accepts members who have graduated from an internationally recognised college of chiropractic education after a minimum of four years full-time training. The BCA promotes high standards of conduct, practice, education and training.

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