



Media Release

January 27, 2015

Teenagers warned to sit up straight

The era of being told to sit up straight at school is slipping away, as new technologies overtake the tradition with more students slouching and slumping over laptops, ipads and smartphones for hours at a time.

With children returning back to school today after the summer holiday break, Chiropractors are calling for an increased focus on posture training at schools in order to combat the epidemic of 'text neck' issues facing teenagers.

The Chiropractors' Association of Australia (NSW) surveyed its membersⁱ, with the results finding their major concerns are technology overuse and sedentary lifestyle amongst youth and over **97 per cent** called for posture training techniques to be introduced at school.

"Technology is all around us and here to stay. While it brings many positives, it's also a double edged sword for our youth with more and more developing neck aches, back pain and headaches from overuse and poor posture habits at school and home," said President of the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (NSW) Dr John de Voy.

"**84 per cent** of Chiropractors listed teenagers as the most concerning group as they spend hours on their smartphones and ipads while travelling to school, then at school they can sit slumped and hunched over laptops, which continues into the evening while they do their homework and watch TV."

Recent researchⁱⁱ in the US found 'text neck' to be an increasing concern with smartphone users spending an average of two to four hours per day hunched over, reading e-mails, sending texts or checking social media sites. That's 700 to 1,400 hours per year people are putting stress on their spines, according to the research.

"High-schoolers might be the worst. They could conceivably spend an additional 5,000 hours in this position," said research author Kenneth Hansraj, who is the chief of spine surgery at New York Spine Surgery and Rehabilitation Medicine.

"The problem is really profound in young people," he said. "With this excessive stress in the neck, we might start seeing young people needing spine care. I would really like to see parents showing more guidance."

Dr de Voy said it would be beneficial to bring back old techniques at school where teachers taught students to sit up straight in the classroom and practice good posture.

“With laptops and computers now overtaking classrooms, it’s important students are educated on how to sit up straight and position themselves correctly to avoid spinal sprain and strain.”

The Association has been rolling out a ‘Straighten Up Australia’ⁱⁱⁱ program across the country, primarily with preschool and kindergarten aged children participating.

“Consisting of a set of simple exercises and taking just three minutes to complete, *Straighten Up Australia* will help improve posture, stabilise core muscle groups, enhance health and prevent spinal disability.

“Studies conducted overseas indicate that 90% of people who adopted the exercises as part of their daily routine reported a postural improvement. Approximately 80% reported that their backs are more comfortable and that they have better core stability after practicing the activities for several weeks.”

Dr de Voy said he would like to see the program rolled out more widely across Australian schools, particularly for teenagers to set them up for healthy posture habits in the future.

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ⁱ Chiropractors’ Association of Australia (NSW), Member Survey, January 2015, results based on 40 respondents who treat an average of 10 school-aged patients per week.

ⁱⁱ ‘Text neck’ is becoming an ‘epidemic’ and could wreck your spine, Washington Post by Lindsey Bever November 20, 2014 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/11/20/text-neck-is-becoming-an-epidemic-and-could-wreck-your-spine/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Straighten Up Australia an initiative of the Chiropractor’s Association of Australia – www.straightenupaaustralia.com.au Brochure attached.