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The Telegraph

The surprising cure 'tech neck' sufferers are embracing

Medics warn younger generation likely to be more prone to tension headaches, muscle spasms and bone spurs

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'Tech neck' is pain and inflammation in the neck area caused by time hunched over smartphones and laptops

Laura Donnelly Health Editor. Pat Hagan

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Smartphone users are increasingly turning to Botox jabs to cure "tech neck" – pain and inflammation from time hunched over devices.

Doctors have reported a rise in patients seeking the injections to combat tension headaches, muscle spasms and even bone spurs – painful growths in the neck joints due to poor posture.

Some sufferers are having repeat injections every six to nine months.

A full course of treatment can cost up to £600.

Medics warn the problem is likely to be even worse for the younger generation growing up with smartphones.

Dr Christopher Rowland Payne, one of the UK's leading dermatologists who runs a private clinic in London, said he treats up to 100 patients a year with Botox to ease neck pain often caused by being hunched over digital devices.

"It's becoming more common because people are spending so much time on their phones and computers," he said.

Dr Ashwin Soni, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon said: "The number of patients needing Botox injections for this type of neck pain is definitely on the increase."

"Lots of them are in pain because they are constantly bending their neck forward and not taking good care of their posture.

"I'm probably seeing up to ten patients a month at the moment and most are over 40.

"They may have spent years hunched over their desks or smartphones and not looked after their posture very well," said the surgeon, who runs The Soni Clinic based in London and Berkshire.

'Traptox' popularity

Botox is usually injected into the trapezius muscles at the back of the neck to relax them and improve mobility.

The jab has become so popular that it is known in cosmetic surgery circles as "traptox".

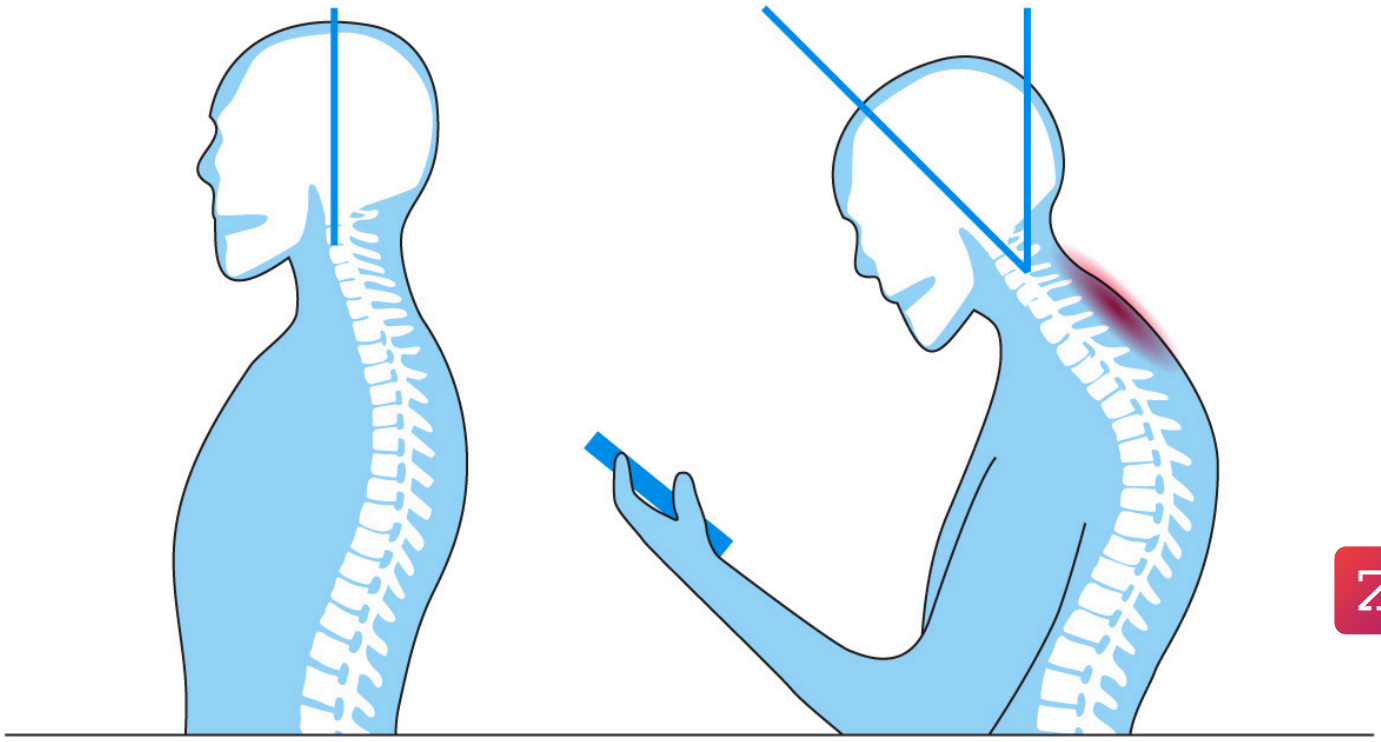
How ‘Traptox’ treats Tech Neck for £600

1 KCL research recently found an upright head puts 11lbs of force on the spine

2 Being hunched over at 45° angle using a phone increases force to 48lbs

3 ‘Tech neck’ causes pain and tension in the trapezius muscles. It can lead to inflammation, bone spurs, tension headaches and muscle spasms

4 Botox injections in the muscles, dubbed Traptox, relax muscles and ease discomfort



Dr Soni said: “Some people are after a quick fix. But I only give one or two jabs and then recommend they see a physiotherapist, or take up yoga or Pilates, to improve their mobility and posture.”

Dr Rowland Payne and Zoe Barley, a medical student from King’s College London, presented new research on the rise of “tech neck” at the first-ever meeting of the Royal Society of Medicine’s section of aesthetic medicine and surgery, held recently in London.

It showed that in an upright position, the human head weighs 5kg. That’s the load placed on the upper part of the spine.

But at a 30-degree angle, the force increases to 18kg.

And at 45 degrees – the angle many smartphone users position their heads at – it jumps to 22kg.

Risks on children

In a report on the research, Ms Barley said: “This is the equivalent of a seven-year-old child draped around the neck. And now the problem is shifting more towards children.

“Digital devices are used widely in schools now and do have obvious educational benefits but many teachers may be unaware of the risks for these children later in life.”

The research showed young children and teenagers between eight and 18 spend an average of 3.75 hours a day glued to their smartphones alone.

Adults are on them for even longer – an average of more than five hours a day.

Doctors say they are beginning to see a greater number of cases where children are suffering tension headaches, torticollis – where neck muscle spasms tilt the head to one side – and impaired mobility, due to bending their head to scroll on their phones.

Previous studies have shown that up to 48 per cent of workers in the UK have neck problems at least partly related to the use of digital devices.

Prevention measures

Simple prevention measures include holding smartphones at eye level as much as possible and ensuring computers at work and school are also raised so the head is upright.

Dr Rowland Payne said: “Children should also be playing outside and not on their phones all the time.

“And anyone who is using their phone should sit up straight and try and hold out up in front of the face to ease the strain on their neck.”

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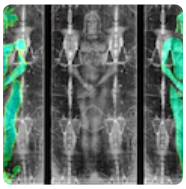

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