

The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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New Technology Creates New Illnesses

Presented by:

Have you ever heard of a Blackberry Thumb? What about Cell Phone Elbow? Acute Wii-itis? They are new health problems related to modern technology – and the tendency of humans to get carried away playing with their new toys.

If you have not heard of these new terms, here is a brief definition of each:

❁ Blackberry Thumb – pain in and around the joint of the thumb, potentially leading to osteoarthritic changes to this joint. Thought to be caused by excessive text-messaging on Blackberry-type mobile phone devices.¹⁻²

❁ Cell Phone Elbow – ulnar nerve entrapment syndrome at the elbow, caused by prolonged use of cell phones requiring this joint to be held in a bent position for long periods of time.³

❁ Acute Wii-itis – a repetitive strain syndrome in the upper extremity or spine usually caused by previously inactive individuals participating in a vigorous assortment of sporting events using the motion-sensitive controllers on home video game systems like the Nintendo Wii.⁴

As computers and related high technology continue to advance, our bodies often find it difficult to keep up.

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Any time we engage in repetitive activities, there is the danger of wear and tear on the body. Muscles, nerves and other soft tissues are organized in multiple layers under the skin. When nerves fire and muscles contract, movement occurs. But where there is movement, there is the potential for friction. Too much friction can increase the possibility of damage, inflammation and dysfunction.

In a recently published journal article, a chiropractor reported a series of 4 patient cases in his practice involving repetitive strain syndromes in children 3 to 9 years of age. In each case, the cause appeared to be related to a prolonged session of playing with the Wii video game system. The symptoms included spinal pain, spinal joint dysfunction (subluxation) and extremity pain.

Fortunately, all cases of Wii-itis were resolved after a single chiropractic treatment.⁵

Another contributing factor related to the onset of injuries using these electronic gaming systems is the fitness level of the participant.



Exercise of the Week

Plank Position

- Feet on Exercise Ball

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Lie on ball, face down. Place hands on floor and lift both legs to position body in a push-up (plank) position. Keep stomach tucked in and spine straight.

Exercise: Walk hands forward, maintaining a steady plank position – go out as far as you can without losing straight body position. Most difficult position: only feet are left on ball. Hold at whatever finish position you can achieve for 15-30 seconds. Walk hands back to start position. Repeat 3-5 times.



People who like to play video games for extended periods of time are not typically the ones with athletic builds. And they do not usually possess the most optimal combination of strength, flexibility and cardiovascular fitness.

However, the advent of these new motion-sensitive controllers encourages armchair athletes to participate as if they were actually playing the sports. Given the number of individuals participating in these virtual sport games, it is not surprising your chiropractor sees an increasing number of acute injuries like Wii-itis.

Another consideration is posture and ergonomics. Holding a cell phone in texting mode often requires a head-forward, head-down position. This can place a large demand on the postural muscles, not to mention the joints and discs of the neck and upper spine. If you make it a habit to perform these actions often, or for prolonged periods of time, you are likely to encounter discomfort and dysfunction.¹

Thankfully, chiropractors are well-trained to deal with almost any musculoskeletal disorders that result from cell phone, texting or video game usage. Chiropractic adjustments are very effective at treating conditions of the spine and the extremities.

What about Prevention?

Avoiding injuries should be the number one concern with this new technology.

To reduce the risk, do the following:

- 1) Avoid overuse of the text-message feature on your cell phone – try calling instead or meet in person.
- 2) Use a hands-free feature like the speakerphone option or headsets to minimize the strain on the neck, shoulder and elbow.

On an even more serious note: Never try to operate a motor vehicle while attempting to dial a cell phone or to text. According to statistics, a person is 23 times more likely to be at risk for a crash or near-crash event while performing these tasks. This makes texting while driving as bad as driving while under the influence of alcohol.⁶

Advances in technology are very useful and can make life a lot easier. However, every effort should be made to reduce the risks associated with using these new technologies.



Quote to Inspire

“Give the world the best you have and the best will come back to you.”

- Madeline Bridges

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