

Long Screen Time “Rules” in COVID-19, Posture is the Key

By Sweta BOGRHA

COVID-19, the mayhem has led to a third of the world's population coming under some form of lockdown, thereby forcing most of us to work from home. While it does sound relaxing and highly productive, it would probably not be the same with a few tiny little ones, playing and jumping around.

Screen time challenge

Many working parents are facing challenging situations without access to babysitters, play dates and most of the other entertainment activities that generally keep the children engaged outside the house. Keeping the young ones at home is an even bigger challenge in a cramped-up space. Probably the best deal one could strike to get some focused work time is giving the children your phone or tablet for a few hours to keep them engaged.

On a normal day, a child spends around one to three hours with electronic gadgets, during these homebound times, it would probably be way higher. Without allowing the information that will now be shared to send you on a guilt trip, please do look at some facts, before leaving these little warriors with electronic gadgets for a very long time. Additionally, one could also make the necessary corrections that would help both parties.

Posture matters

A semi-reclined position is the most preferred by everyone, irrespective of age when using gadgets for a long duration. If a sitting posture is made compulsory, most kids including adults, end up slouching over the table.

The normal weight of the head in an ideal posture,

increases to six times with just an increase in one inch of neck flexion. The use of tablets increases this angle more as compared to the use of a desktop, and places a higher load on the muscles.

This difference is mainly because tablets and phones are mostly placed horizontal while in use and are below eye level.



“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them”. So it begins with you!

Children do experience discomfort in the neck region due to bad posture and the chances of developing musculoskeletal issues are more cause for concern as they are still in the growing phase.

Additionally, research shows that there is a direct relationship between the use of electronic devices and negative musculoskeletal outcomes.

Small changes make the differences

Some basic changes may help now and in the long run.

- 1. Avoid holding the device in hands, place the device on a table and propping it more vertically reduces the muscle activity and neck flexion angles.**
- 2. If a table is not available easily, any form of an armrest while using a phone or tablet would reduce the biomechanical load on the shoulder and neck.**
- 3. If a sofa is the only option, guide the children to sit further behind to place their backs against the sofa back. Place a few pillows on their lap and keep the phone on it (vertical would be better).**
- 4. Plan frequent breaks that include some moving time like a few jumps, a run or a water break to avoid static postures.**
- 5. Time their usage of the device in a day.**

About the author

Sweta BOGRHA, a physiotherapist from Sportsperformance Physiotherapy, is passionate about a healthy and active lifestyle. She likes to spend her spare time in hiking, does a few laps in the pool and regulates her own mind and body via Tai Chi.