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Share the Wellness Tip

Turning Down Technology Use

Have you ever lost your phone or tablet? Going without technology for a short time can make us realize how much we rely on it. If you spend hours connected to gadgets, be careful. They may be taking a toll on your health.

Technology offers tremendous benefits, but sometimes at a price. Chronic computer users often suffer from vision problems and fatigue. Frequent texters can develop severe thumb pain.

And one survey found that half of American high school kids already have experienced at least one symptom of hearing loss, such as ringing in the ear. This hearing loss is attributed in part to the growing popularity of handheld devices and tablets.

How can you use and enjoy technology without hurting your health? Below are some common devices and ways to use them safely:

At the desk. Protect yourself from eye problems, like blurred vision, caused by staring at computer monitors by taking frequent breaks to stretch and look away from the computer screen. And save your shoulders and back from aches and pains due to hunching over the keyboard by making sure your back is supported and adjusting your computer monitor to eye level.

Texting troubles - Ergonomic experts are predicting that a new generation of hand injuries may be happening because of the trend toward touch screen versions of smart devices, which involve more one-finger typing and swiping of the thumb than simply typing with the thumbs. To reduce the risk of these injuries, write shorter messages. Try typing without the thumb and take a break every few minutes to stretch your hand, open it and spread your fingers wide. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat eight times.

Listen in - To avoid hearing loss, turn down the music on your phone or device to around 60 percent or less of the total volume. You also can reduce your urge to crank it up by investing in noise-reduction-style earphones.

Hang up - Mobile phones are linked to increased injury on the road because they can cause distraction. To lower your risk, avoid phone use and texting while driving.

Just like gambling or drinking alcohol, the use of technology — such as email or texting — can become addictive. Seek help if you have compulsive or excessive urges to use technology that cause problems in your work or relationships.

Sources: Canadian Medical Association Journal, March 5, 2013; Healthday.com Sept. 9, 2006

