

SECOND EDITION

Turkey Neck and Humped Backs

HOW OUR MOBILE DEVICES
ARE AGING US

And what we can do about it
in 3 simple steps



Maxine Free RN, M.Ed.



***TURKEY NECKS and HUMPED BACKS: How Our Mobile Devices Are Aging Us and What We Can Do about It in Three Easy Steps** is a preventive tool against the potentially harmful effects of poor posture and our hand held mobile devices. This book outlines the common causes of a turkey or tech neck and what causes a humped back and the importance of staying in the Neutral Zone, stretching and strengthening. It also looks at our children and the importance of reflecting and teaching them healthy mobile devices habits.*

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**How Our Mobile Devices Are Aging Us and
What We Can Do About It in Three Easy Steps**

2nd edition

Maxine Free

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Second Edition

DISCLAIMER

This book details the author's personal experiences and observations of the potential problems of a turkey neck and a humped back due to the prolonged use of hand held mobile devices. The author is a registered nurse, but has not worked directly for a chiropractor or a plastic surgeon.

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This book is dedicated to everybody that uses a mobile device, especially the youngest of users – our next generation. 10% of the author's proceeds from the sale of this book and e-book will go into “Head Up/Chin Up,” the educational program created by the author to teach children, teachers and parents the importance of good posture and healthy mobile device habits.

Forward

Our mobile devices are truly a quantum leap. We went from landlines in our home and offices, to instant communication anywhere and at any time. Our apps and search engines allow anyone to find answers or services needed at any time and for anything. This is truly a quantum leap for humanity and the possibilities are endless. This second edition of Turkey Neck and Humped Backs provides the opportunity for correction, clarification and explanation.

Hand held mobile devices have changed the way we live our lives. Not only do we talk, socialize, shop and work on our hand held mobile devices, our devices are now teaching us about ourselves. The FitBit and other mobile wristbands are the newest mobile devices for adults. These devices tell us our heart rates, blood pressure, sleep patterns and everything else our home computers could do. The direct connection to our body is giving us greater power over the choices we make. We are now able to instantly adjust our workouts and sleep patterns for optimal health. The explosion of the app world is giving us greater power

over our daily lives. Apps are enriching and optimizing our lives with an array of services, direction and advice. We are only at the very beginning of this technical revolution. As these devices assist in our health, they with the rest of hand held mobile devices may also have a negative impact on our health.

Hand held mobile devices have the potential of aging our bodies, if we are not careful. What our mobile phones, tablets, laptops and fitness bands do is force us to constantly look down. This motion of reading your text or shopping for those pair of shoes can easily lead us into the poor posture of hanging our heads forward and down, chins pressed into our chest and shoulders scrunched up. With a little bit of body awareness, the danger of poor posture on our mobile devices can be easily avoided.

This book was written with the intention of introducing body awareness and the potential dangers of hand held mobile devices. Just as we take our daily multivitamin as a preventive tool, so to can this book be used as a preventive tool. A tool that can be used anywhere, at any time and by anyone – old or young.

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As a registered nurse, I have always been concerned with posture and how people hold themselves. Body mechanics is an important part of patient care and I have always included it in my nursing plans. But the nursing plans that dealt with proper posture were always for my older patients. If there were swallowing issues, I would check to see if they were hanging their heads down and chins pressed into their chest. If this were the case, I would teach the patient proper head posture – head held back, ears over the shoulders and the importance of maintaining this posture. If they had difficulty breathing, I would educate my patients and their families on the importance of opening up their chest by bringing their shoulders back and down away from their ears, head and chin up; this allows their lungs to expand, letting oxygen in. Back pain, hip pain and knee pain – the common pains for geriatric patients, can also be attributed to poor posture. Of course I am in no position to diagnosis or even suggest that their pain was due to poor posture. But it is within my scope of practice to educate patients and their families on healthy living and wellness. Proper posture and how one holds oneself up for the world to see, plays a vital role in the overall health of our body and

wellbeing, not to mention helping out some of those aches and pains we may be experiencing. According to Nobel Prize winner Dr. Hans Selye “if you have postural imbalances, you will compensate causing your spine to misalign and increase strain on your body.” He goes on to say in his General Adaptation Syndrome that this increase strain on your body “can cause long term chemical imbalances”. (Selye, H. 2014)

I’ve also been concerned with young children and their posture. It was usually centered on their heavy, ill-fitted backpacks that they carry to and from school. I remember seeing little kids lugging their overloaded backpacks as they head off to school. The backpacks would be hanging half-way down their legs, with their head, neck and shoulders straining way forward to balance out the heavy load. It appears that backpack makers have realized this problem and now have little backpacks for little people and larger ones for the rest of us. They have also made it much easier to adjust the straps for a better fit. Some of them even have a waist strap for added support.

Today there is an even greater threat to children and their posture, and one that is threatening the very,

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very young as well – video games, social media and hand held mobile devices. Of course, the devices are not the threat. The threat lies in the amount of time they spend on their mobile devices and the potential of slipping into a more comfortable, less than desirable body posture, which is my main concern. Children are not in threat of turkey neck or a tech neck, but the possibility of a humped back is of great concern. Children’s bodies are developing well into their early twenties. Proper posture, strengthening and stretching needs to be a part of the lives of children and their mobile devices.

This would be a good time to mention my disclaimer. I have never worked in the field of plastic surgery, nor for a chiropractor. I have worked for many years in the healthcare field and have always been keenly aware of the body posture of my patients. This book is a product of my combined observations of hand held mobile devices and my observations of body mechanics of the young and the old. This book was created to be used as a preventive tool, with the hopes of preventing future problems of a turkey neck, tech neck or a humped back due to poor posture. If you feel

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you have a postural problem, or you suffer from headaches, insomnia, nerve tingling in your arms or fingers or you have pain of the head, neck or shoulders, please see your healthcare provider before attempting the stretches or exercises in this book.

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Introduction

The world of hand held mobile devices is a young world and still growing. Along with growth though, come the inevitable growing pains. This book will address an important and potentially dangerous growing pain within the mobile device world – poor mobile device posture. The issue is not our mobile devices or even the amount of time that we spend on them. The issue is how we hold our bodies, whether we are sitting or standing, as we check our email or Facebook. When people say that we should not spend so much time on our mobile devices and live a more balanced life, I would have to respectfully disagree. Mobile devices have become such an important part of our work, play, socializing and relaxing that our “balanced life” must include our devices. What needs to change is our awareness of our body posture on our hand held mobile devices. More specially, we need to be aware of how we are holding our head, neck and shoulders as we use our mobile devices.

The understanding of body posture and the explosion of technology first entered into our social

consciousness in the form of carpal tunnel syndrome, also known as median nerve compression. Carpal tunnel syndrome became an issue of awareness in the 1990's, when we were just beginning the leap from typewriters to our very own PC – personal computer. The problem of course was not the computer, but of the way we held our wrists as we typed on the keyboard. We carried over our wrist position from the typewriter, to the lower and flatter keyboard. Because a keyboard lay much lower than our typewriters, our wrists were bending down, thus causing pressure on the median nerve. Over time this repetitive, bending of the wrist caused permanent damage known as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Carpal tunnel syndrome cost the work force millions of dollars in lost wages and work hours. It also caused an unnecessary burden to our health care system, due to the many hours of physical therapy, medications and reconstructive surgeries needed to repair the damage. I believe this all could have been avoided with the simple knowledge of holding ones wrists in a neutral position as one types and being

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aware that wrists cannot be bent like that for large amounts of time.

This social consciousness of body position I believe needs to expand now to our mobile devices. This quantum leap into mobile devices and the app world is happening so fast, that we are physically unable to keep up with it. Before major damage can begin on a large scale, just as carpal tunnel syndrome happened in the 1990's, I hope to raise the awareness of our body position and our beloved devices.

The idea for this book came to me as I witnessed three major, but subtle events that happened in the scope of a twenty four hour period. It was a Sunday morning and I was sitting at my kitchen table, first cup of coffee in hand. I started browsing through the most important part of the Sunday paper – upcoming sales. I noticed that at all the big name stores, large sections were devoted to children and mobile devices. When I say 'young children', I mean the very young, like toddlers. This young population, now have mobile device products devoted entirely to them (and their parents of course). Leap Frog, now has an entire

Learning Library, for all ages. There is the Leap Frog Pad and Leap Frog Reader Books, there are not only tablets and mobile phones geared toward children, there is the Inno Tab, full of games and lessons, Nabi Tablets, Amazon Fire Kid edition and of course, all of the video games on Wii, PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo. As the coffee settled into my gray matter, so did a glimpse into our future generation – a generation of incredibly bright people, operating their world remotely and efficiently from their mobile devices.

The second subtle sign appeared the next morning. I headed up to our local college and standing at the bus stop were about eight college students, all of them staring down at their hand held mobile devices. I did my business and returning home, I noticed the same eight students, hunched forward and down. I really don't think they even moved. I remember saying to myself, "ten years and you guys are going to be having hunched backs just like my seventy year old patients - guaranteed". The last and not so subtle sign came when I got stuck behind the Monday morning school bus. Every other block was stop and go. As I watched the children leave their homes and jump onto the bus,

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I couldn't help but notice some of the poor posture these little kids already had. Their heads were pointing way forward, backs hunched out as they lugged their heavy backpacks. These little kids looked just like some of those seventy year old patients with poor posture, the hunched back and their forward heads pushing way forward.

These were the final signs that motivated me to finally write about a subject that I think is very important – how we hold ourselves up in the world. More specifically, how we hold ourselves up in the world as we use our beloved mobile devices. Good posture not only affects our appearance, our overall body structure and the appearance of being confident; it also affects things such as our joints, blood flow, our skin and as Nobel Prize winner Dr. Hans Selye mentioned, the very chemical balance of our entire body. For children it has an even larger effect on them. Their bodies are still developing and growing. Therefore proper, strong posture assists children in healthy growing, healthy joints and strong muscles. You're never too young to learn proper posture,

especially if mom and dad are practicing good posture along with you.

Practice puts brains in your muscles – Sam Snead

Chapter One: Times Have Changed will look at the increase of hand held mobile devices in our daily lives. Now more than ever people are banking, working, socializing, relaxing with a movie, or just killing time on their mobile devices. If healthy mobile device habits are not developed during these long stretches of time, risk of turkey neck or tech neck and a humped back is possible. The science of Ergonomics and the self-awareness tool of the Alexander Technique will also be discussed. Chapter Two: Turkey Neck – Tech Neck looks at just what does happen to the body when turkey neck occurs. We will address the most common cause of turkey neck, which is poor posture, over time, allowing the frontal neck muscles to become flaccid and weak. Tech neck, the modern day term for the same problem, is the result of poor posture, compounded by the long hours spent on mobile devices. In Chapter Three: Humped Backs – Kids Beware we will look at the fact that young children

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may not be interested in turkey neck, but they need to be concerned with the possibility of a humped back. This chapter will explore the most common cause of the humped back, which again is poor posture and the unique risks to our younger, still developing and growing generation. Chapter Four: Live in the Neutral Zone examines the very important, first of three steps that will help prevent a turkey neck and a humped back. Proper posture and being aware of your body throughout the day is the key to operating your mobile devices in a healthy way. Chapter Five: Stretch and Strengthen for Daily Use will explore why it is important to stretch and strengthen our neck muscles and tendons. Why stretching and strengthening is an essential part of preventing turkey neck and humped back. Finally Chapter Six: Hey Kids Head Up/Chin Up will look at our children and mobile devices. The importance of the Neutral Zone, stretching and strengthening for their growing and developing bodies and the importance teachers and parents play in setting good examples of using their hand held mobile devices in healthy and productive ways. Throughout the book I have inserted exercises. These exercises give us the opportunity to try and test the topic that was

just discussed. The underlying goal of these exercises though is to practice self-awareness of our body posture. To really feel how poor posture feels and then to feel the difference once it is corrected. It is this awareness of our body that will bring about the changes necessary to prevent aging from our mobile devices.

Our hand held mobile devices are not going anywhere, so we therefore need to learn to operate them in a healthy way. The three simple steps we will learn within this book are important, but there is an even more important role as we practice these healthy mobile device habits throughout our day. That is the need to reflect and teach our children these healthy mobile devices habits. For it is this generation that will bring hand held mobile devices into its next era.



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