

BREAKING UP WITH TECH NECK

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

I woke up at 4 AM, feeling my chin pulled into my chest. I tried to take some deep breaths to soothe the pain. There was a surging pulse up the back of my neck that wrapped around my skull to my eyes. I tossed and turned a few more times, and then let out a “WTF!?! I teach yoga.”

Tech neck is pain or discomfort essentially caused by a cervical kyphosis or protraction of the head – or in plain English, a neck that’s hunched forward. The discomfort can show up not only in your neck but your back, shoulders, and head, perhaps even down your arms.

With our ever-growing reliance on technology, tech neck was bad pre-2020... but now the Saturdays you might have formerly spent out at a restaurant, are now likely spent on your iPad. Water cooler conversation? Now it’s an online chat. I was never that into TV, but 2020 and 2021 kept me glued to the news headlines – TV, Phone, Laptop. Oof.

Tech neck. Sometimes the longer I sit at the computer it seems like the closer and closer my head gets to the screen.

I’ve been privileged to have years of study with some really phenomenal yoga and movement instructors. From their collective knowledge, here are my go-to tech neck relievers. These might feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable, but

don’t stay in any of them if they feel painful.

Ergonomics: How are you positioned? Last Saturday I caught myself texting with my head literally upside down, almost looking into my belly button. I checked in with myself, what am I doing? I was lacking awareness of my body’s position in space. In a perfect world, our spine would be long, eyes level with



the screen. For work or downtime - do you need to sit in a chair? Is a standing desk an option? How about a seated on some cushions on the floor with your computer elevated? Can you switch scenery every hour or so? Set yourself up for success. Notice how your body is positioned while you’re sleeping – if your neck and shoulders are in flexion – it may be time to switch to lying on

your back.

Constructive Rest: Lay flat on your back, knees bent and feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Let the muscles around your neck, chest and spine rest in anatomical position. Stay for at least two minutes – and as long as you are able. Ready to level up? On your inhale, turn your head to the side, and exhale it back to center. Inhale to the other side, and exhale back to center.

Use a Wall: Much like constructive rest, you can stand against a wall to let your spine come to its neutral alignment. Press the back of your head against the wall. Sometimes we think that we are standing up straight, but the wall will really show you how far your head might be leaning forward. If leaning against the wall is already a lot, stop there. If it feels simple, bring your arms up like a football goal post, backs of the arms against the wall. Keep your arms

touching the wall as you reach your arms overhead, finger tips moving toward each other. Bring your arms back down to the starting position without letting your arms move away from the wall. Try to keep your neck muscles soft. Repeat until you fatigue.

Get Outside: Keep your cell phone in your pocket or at home. No screens



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outside means no tech neck – even a five-minute walk can make a huge difference sometimes.

Blanket Roll: Take a blanket or beach towel and roll it up. The thicker the roll, the more intense – so start small. Lie on the blanket roll so that the top of the blanket roll lines up with the bottom tips of your shoulder blades, and your shoulders can relax down toward the ground. Bring your arms to that goal post shape. Feel the area from your collar bones to your shoulders get long.

Arms overhead: Notice your arm position when you are at a screen.

Odds are your hands are always lower than your shoulders, so try loading up muscle tissues a little bit differently. Stand in a door frame with your fingertips on the casing. Breathe. You can also try a downward facing dog pose. Your arms are overhead, but you’re upside down. Bonus for your eyes. Just like the above postures are about doing something different with your musculoskeletal alignment, do something different with your gaze. Look left and right with your eyeballs, without moving your head for a quick break from your screen. Close your eyes for a minute or two. If you have more time, try candle gazing – Google Trataka if you are interested in

more information.

Massage, chiropractic care and physical therapy can really be life changing. If these DIY’s are not helping, give those a try. If your neck pain is persistent, see a medical professional to make sure that there is no other medical condition showing up in your neck.

If you need to make a shift away from the screen and you’re still not sure how to make it happen, reach out to me for a no-risk phone consultation. Therapeutic Yoga could be what you need to change how you’re moving through your life. More info at TozziYoga.com.

