

Is neck posture subgroup in late adolescence a risk factor for persistent neck pain in young adults? A prospective study

The Objective:

Despite the term “text neck” becoming a prominent term in society, current research has not found evidence to support this notion. To explore this further, this study sought to determine whether neck posture in a seated position was a risk factor for persistent neck pain in young adults.

What We Did:

686 young adults in Western Australia were included in this study, which assessed posture at 17 years of age and then answered further questions at 22 years of age around neck pain and occupation type. Statistical analysis was performed to determine whether neck posture at age 17 was a risk factor for persistent neck pain at age 22.

The 4 subgroups of sitting neck posture were determined as:

1. Upright
2. Intermediate
3. Slumped thorax/ forward head position
4. Erect thorax/forward head position

What We Found:

In males, there was no association between neck posture at age 17 and persistent neck pain at age 22.

In females, the upright posture sitting group at age 17 had more pain than those with a slumped posture and forward head position at age 22.

Clinical Implications:

Multiple high-quality research reviews have found that spinal alignment and posture does not differ between those with or without neck pain. In fact, the upright sitting subgroup had more persistent neck pain which questions the common belief that forward head posture is a cause of neck pain. This also highlights that attempting to “correct” posture for those experiencing neck pain, need not be a required rehabilitation goal.

Reference

Richards K, Beales D, Smith A, O'Sullivan P & Straker L. (2021). Is Neck Posture Subgroup in Late Adolescence a Risk Factor for Persistent Neck Pain in Young Adults? A Prospective Study. *Physical Therapy*.

