It's a Pain in the Neck

We're all guilty of it. Staring down at your cellphone while in line at Starbucks. Slouching on the sofa with your iPad. Craning your neck to look at your second monitor at work.

It's little wonder that many of us are afflicted with "tech neck." Its symptoms include neck and upper-back pain and headaches.

Other than throwing modern technology out the window, what can you do to combat tech neck? Justin Lau, D.C., co-owner of Elite Spinal & Sports Care in Sacramento, offers some advice.

Lau recommends holding your smartphone in one hand, palm up, with your elbow close to your side and using the other hand to type. "This supinates the wrist and externally rotates the shoulder," he explains. For laptop or tablet users, he advises using a wireless, full-sized keyboard and mouse—a vertical mouse also is an option—so you type using proper ergonomics. And place your laptop at eye level. When you're working at a computer, Lau suggests sitting at the edge of your chair and dropping one knee down below the hip, thus tilting the pelvis anteriorly, while supporting your elbow and wrist on the table. Finally, move. Lau is a fan of Brugger (also spelled Bruegger) exercises, which "stretch tissues that have been shortened and contracts tissues that have been lengthened by poor posture." He also favors sit-stand workstations, alternating between the two about every 15 minutes. "You can train the body for pretty much any movement, but you cannot train it to be still. We are meant to move," says Lau. *—Elena M. Macaluso*