

[IMAGE]

Hurting for Answers

In today's world, computers, video games, pizza and extreme sports are the norms in our children's lives. Our habits, diets and hobbies all change as the world around us does. Unfortunately, another norm today may be adolescent neck, back and shoulder pain.

A recent study in the *British Medical Journal* analyzed instances of back and neck pain from 1985-2001, and cases of neck, shoulder and low back pain from 1991-2001, in Finnish adolescents. Every two years, postal surveys were gathered, representing 12-, 14-, 16- and 18-year-olds from a national sample of over 60,000 teens. Classroom surveys were also obtained for twice as many 14- to 16-year-olds. The researchers' goal was to determine the number of kids with pain at least weekly.

Back and neck pain prevalence was greater in the 1990s than the 1980s; it also increased steadily from 1993-1997. Neck, shoulder and back pain prevalence significantly increased from 1991 to 2001. Pain was most common in girls and older children.

Are our children more susceptible to musculoskeletal pain these days? The results of this and similar studies make for a convincing argument. Is it due to new information technology leading to increased computer use, which involves repetitive movements and static postures? Is it due to poor diets or lack of activity? There are no clear answers yet, but in the meanwhile, you can keep your kids active and on a healthy diet to help prevent chronic pain.

Reference:

Hakala P, Rimpelä A, et al. Back, neck, and shoulder pain in Finnish adolescents: National cross sectional surveys. *British Medical Journal* 2002;325, pp. 743-746.

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