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Social media addiction bad for hands

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NEW DELHI: Here is another reason to stop excessive use of Facebook and WhatsApp — orthopaedic experts have warned against cases of wrist and finger joint pain, arthritis and repetitive stress injuries to the hand, arms and back.

Raju Vaishya, the president of Arthritis Care Foundation (ACF) and orthopaedic surgeon at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, said: "We are getting a lot of patients who constantly use smart phones and tablets for texting and come in with complains of aches and pains in their fingers, thumbs and hands. This pain and stiffness may be the result of Repetitive Stress Injury [RSI], which occurs when the same motion is repeated over

and over again for a long period of time, causing inflammation to the ligaments and tendons of joints."

He added that those indulge in too much texting on social media, and gaming on smartphones and tablets can suffer from wrist and finger joint pain and some time crippling arthritis of the fingers.

"In case of children, the longer use of gaming devices is associated with more pain," said Ashwani Maichand, senior consultant and director of the institute of bone and joint, MGS Hospital.

According to Rahul Gupta, senior neuro and spine surgeon, Fortis Hospital, RSI can result from recurrent large or small movements that affect joints, muscles, tendons, and nerves.

For example, people who frequently use their thumbs to type text messages on cell phones sometimes develop radial styloid tenosynovitis, also called De Quervain syndrome, BlackBerry thumb or texting thumb, a painful affliction that involves the tendons that move the thumb. Although the causal link isn't as well established as in the case of patients who suffer from pain due to prolonged desktop keyboard use, there's little doubt that overzealous texting can cause debilitating pain.

Wrong postures

Doctors state that most people use touch screen in unnatural and wrong postures. Stress-related injuries can also occur when people use their bodies in ways that induce physical stress, such as

tilting their hands too far inward or outward while tapping or putting force on their wrists while typing. Carpal tunnel syndrome, perhaps the best-known disease in this category, results from pressure on the median nerve in the wrist.

"Your neck and the cervical spine that supports it are highly susceptible to poor posture, which can compress or stretch on the nerves that exit the spinal cord. Resist the temptation to bend your neck forward or backward, and especially avoid turning your head or tilting it to one side or another for prolonged periods. Take frequent breaks, and if you feel pain, numbness, or tingling, stop what you're doing and find a comfortable position," added Dr. Gupta.