



Telephone

Overview

Most people are surprised to learn that misusing the telephone can lead to shoulder and neck pain. Yet if you're like most, you probably occasionally cradle the telephone between your head and a hunched shoulder, talking and typing simultaneously - a sure-fire prescription for pain. Below are tips for using and positioning your telephone to help reduce the likelihood of experiencing discomfort.

Set-up & Positioning

Positioning Your Phone

If you frequently answer or place calls from a corded phone (where the numbers are located on the phone's base), the base should be positioned in your normal reach zone. To determine the area covered by this zone, reach each arm out to the side of your body and move them from this position until the hands meet at the center of your body in front of you. Your phone, along with everything else you use frequently, should be within this zone. For people who rarely use the phone, a more distant position is fine to free up space for other commonly used items (like documents).

Tips for Healthy Telephone Usage

1. Use a phone with the right set of features.

If you frequently place calls, consider using a cordless phone or one with the number pad on the receiver rather than the base. This will help you avoid having to extend your reach to dial. However, if you often make calls to voice mail and other automated systems, using a phone with desktop numeric pad will be more convenient (since you'll need to listen and press keys simultaneously).

2. Learn proper phone position.

Learn how to hold your phone in a proper position against your ear: head straight and shoulders relaxed (not hunched). Your shoulder and head can be bent slightly to one side to cradle the phone, though preferably not for prolonged periods of time (as this can cause muscle aches in the upper back and neck). If you tend to use the phone for long durations, consider alternating ears and supporting the hand on a regular basis. If your calls tend to be shorter, consider alternating ears and hands each every other call.



3. Consider using a headset.

This allows hands-free phone conversations and eliminates the risk of any discomfort or injury associated with improper phone use. It is superior to a speakerphone because it will work well in a noisy environment or with confidential conversations. If you use the phone frequently all day long, a headset is your best option. Headsets can be purchased at most electronics or office supply stores for a price ranging from \$35-\$250, and then easily installed on any phone. If you do use a headset with a single earpiece, consider alternating ears to eliminate any discomfort that may be caused by continuous pressure on your ear.

4. Consider using a speakerphone.

This allows hands-free phone conversations, eliminating the risk of any discomfort or injury associated with improper phone use. Speakerphones do have practical limitations: they generally won't work well in a noisy environment or for confidential conversations, and can sometimes reduce the sound quality of the conversation.