

Today's Technology Can Be Toxic Posing Development Issues for Kids



Dr. Ballam makes a connection with children of all ages to help diagnose health issues that will benefit from chiropractic treatment.

Notes Dr. John Ballam, of Legacy Chiropractic in Cary, “If a child’s body is misaligned and it’s not taken care of, they will adapt to the misalignment because their bodies are still in the process of developing.

“Untreated physical issues may create problems later in life,” he points out. “Chiropractic care for children is a healing, holistic alternative to more radical medical options.”

Dr. Ballam has examined babies who were several days old, making extremely gentle adjustments and treatments. He finds that babies frequently sleep through treatments because they are that comfortable, and they commonly respond rapidly to chiropractic attention.

“I saw this with my own daughter as she started crawling,” he notes. “She was starting to crawl in an unusual way—not using both of her knees. I checked her and gently adjusted her pelvis. She immediately started to crawl properly. If this condition was left uncorrected, it clearly had the potential to affect how she walks, her balance and coordination, and who knows what else?”

Many problems later in life can be the result of an incorrect crawling pattern, Dr. Ballam finds. “Babies are constantly turning over, and as they learn to crawl and walk, they fall and trip, and so sometimes they just need a little help correcting their posture. I adjust children very gently and subtly.”

He often evaluates youngsters using puppets (see photo), creating a fun, playful environment. “As they interact with the puppets I’m watching how they walk. Are

they picking up both feet smoothly and striding with both legs evenly? A warning sign may be, are they tiptoe walking? Frequently, that can be an indicator that there

is a misalignment or pressure on the nervous system and their body is compensating. It creates tension almost like a tightly wound guitar string.

“I use the Gonstead chiropractic method in my practice,” explains Dr. Ballam, “applying this visual technique with kids because of its accuracy and specificity. The next step, if the child can stand, is to look at their posture, and then I’ll check their spine with a Nervo-Scope. It’s a small hand-held tool that runs down the spine like two fingers, producing an infrared image indicating areas of inflammation. This can be used with infants and patients of all ages, allowing me to quickly pinpoint any signs of irritation or pressure on the nerves. Additional testing is done case-by-case, as needed. Most kids respond with just a handful of treatments, showing improvement quickly. That’s what I love about chiropractic.”

A DIFFICULT BIRTH

Dr. Ballam recalls that he once treated a very young baby who had a difficult birth. “The parents brought him in complaining of colic: he was fussy, not sleeping, and inconsolable. And the parents were exhausted. The first thing I always look at—before the baby has been taken out of the car seat—is whether he’s tipping his head to the side. This can be an indicator that the neck is not properly aligned. A lot of parents assume that their baby just prefers to hold his head in that way. A good way to check at home is to re-center your baby’s head and see if he tips it back to that same side. That’s what this child did, so I made a gentle adjustment. The parents went home expecting their customary night-time screaming, but the child went to sleep and slept through the night. They couldn’t believe it.

“That’s the beauty of this gentle, but specific adjustment,” he says. “This child’s neck misalignment was creating an irritation to the nervous system. Babies can’t tell you if they hurt, so instead they fuss and cry. Colicky babies are frequently misdiagnosed and many times it’s a stomach or neck issue. These adjustments usually hold and I may never see the baby again.”

“WHO KNEW THAT SMART PHONES WOULD POSE A THREAT TO OUR SPINES.”

TOXIC TECHNOLOGY

Who knew that smart phones would pose a threat to our spines? But, says Dr. Ballam, “they do. That’s because the way we use them—and especially the frequency with which we use them—has a drastic impact on our posture.”



The problem is called ‘tech neck,’ says Dr. Ballam. “It’s caused by the typical posture used in holding and texting on a smart phone (see photo, left). Here’s what’s happening: The average human head weighs approximately 10-12 pounds. When you use your cell phone or tablet incorrectly you add about 10 pounds for every 10 degrees you bend your head out of alignment. If you have a tendency to bend your head 30 degrees to read your cell phone, you’ve increased the weight of your head to about 40 pounds.”

How is this bad for you? “Our heads naturally have a neutral position,” explains Dr. Ballam. “Our ears should align with our shoulders, which should be back and down. When we bend our heads down to stare at tech devices we’re causing excessive stress to our upper spine and back. The neck muscles, tendons, and ligaments that support the head are being misaligned. A new generation of children is growing up with noses glued to their phones and it’s up to parents to make sure that they change their body posture so they don’t end up with serious spinal issues as they grow older.

“The best way to hold a cell phone is to keep the spine in a neutral position, holding the phone until it’s level with your eyes, so you don’t have to look down (see photo, right). You want to look straight at your phone and not have to tip your head and chin down to your chest to look at it.”



There are many new technological devices that impact the body’s posture: cellphones, tablets, computers, video games, and the sedentary lifestyle they encourage, notes Dr. Ballam. “Our children have become so stationary that a new warning should be issued—**sitting is the new smoking!**”

“No longer do kids run around outside playing imaginary games, as past generations did. Instead, they’re sitting at home playing video games and putting tremendous physical stress and strain on their bodies. They need to be outside moving and not staring at technology. Because of this new technological phenomenon, chiropractic care for kids is more important than ever.”

“TECH NECK”: A NEW HEALTH THREAT

Dr. Ballam is now more frequently detecting early signs of arthritis in the necks of young adults and even adolescents. A lot of this is attributed to what is called *tech neck*, a symptom rampant among all ages. He notes: “When babies are born, their spine has no curve in the neck. But the curve develops as they do tummy time and start crawling. They pick up their heads and they create this beautiful C-shaped curve in the neck, which works like a spring to protect it. It’s essential to nourish that curve and preserve it so that as the child grows, that curve stays put and solidifies.

“When kids are staring down at their cell phones, it can completely undo all of that neck curvature. It’s not normal for a teen to have their neck sticking out in front of their shoulders, but it’s extremely common. For every inch forward that the neck and head protrudes, it adds roughly about 10 pounds of stress to the spine. If they carry an additional 10 pounds throughout their lives, what kind of symptoms are they going to experience when they’re 30 or 60 years old?”

“There’s been no previous generation to have grown up using this cellphone technology, so we don’t even know the extent of the symptoms they will develop; we’re guinea pigs now. But what we do know, just studying the biomechanics, is that its common heavy use is not good for the spine.”

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