

7 Diseases Your Grandparents Didn't Suffer From But That You Likely Will

- People in Spain spend an average of 11 hours a day in front of a screen, according to a study carried out by Sondea.
- Using a mobile phone forces the neck to rotate 60° downwards, a gesture that exerts pressure on the spine equal to about 20kg (44 lbs) and is known as 'Smartphone Neck'.
- Qustodio has carried out an analysis of the most common cyber-pathologies related to screen and digital habits that did not exist just a few years ago.

Barcelona, September 29, 2020 – We spend a lot of time, more hours than we sleep, using mobile devices. People in Spain today spend an average of 11 hours a day in front of screens, according to a study carried out by



Sondea. The use of devices with screens has grown notably in recent years, and even more so in recent months due to restrictions related to Covid-19 that have made life much more digital from teleworking to online education.

This excess screen time has exposed and amplified some already familiar psychological problems such as low self esteem, depression and self harm, but also new physical online disorders that most people didn't know existed. Qustodio, the leader in online safety and digital wellbeing for families, has analyzed 7 of the most common physical cyber-pathologies that did not exist just a few years ago:

1. **'Whatsappitis' or 'Smartphone thumb'**. This real condition, also known as cyber-tendinitis is the result of excessive typing on mobile phones causing the thumb to become the dominant finger. The medical term for this is tenosynovitis, which is a painful condition that affects the tendons of the wrist on the thumb side. It used to be prevalent in players of golf or racket sports, but today doctors are seeing it's rise among children and adults.
2. **'Text claw' or 'Cell phone elbow'**. **These are popular names for Carpal tunnel syndrome** (tingling and numbness in the thumb, middle and index finger caused by a pinched median nerve in the wrist) **and Cubital tunnel syndrome** (numbness in the small and ring finger caused by a pinched ulnar nerve in the elbow). Often confused, the two are not new conditions, but they are on the rise in people who



frequently flex their elbow beyond 90 degrees such as when holding a mobile phone or playing a gaming device.

3. **'Smartphone neck'**. The 60° downward posture of our heads when we use many digital devices – receiving or writing messages, watching videos, playing video games for hours or reading on tablets – exerts a pressure on the spine equal to about 20kg (44 lbs). The neck is designed to hold 5kg (10-12 lbs), so the excess causes wear on the anterior wall of the spine.
4. **Obesity**. Spending too much time in front of screens encourages sedentary behaviors and reduces physical activity time, which increases the risk of obesity at a very young age.
5. **Vitamin D deficiency**. Even in sunny Spain, doctors are concerned about low levels of vitamin D intake due to long hours in front of screens, especially among the young population. Critical to the absorption of calcium for healthy bones, a deficiency in this essential vitamin can lead to low bone density and rickets, as well as to chronic fatigue and host of other factors related to the lack of sleep.
6. **Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS)** is a condition caused by spending too much time on screens including computer monitors, laptops, tablets, e-readers, and smartphones. Symptoms include eye strain,



dry eyes and headaches. The biggest physical concern is permanent damage to the retina.

7. **'Bud hearing'** is Qustodio's own term for the poor, diminished or damaged hearing caused by earbuds – not by the device itself, but by the loud volumes over long periods of time that they transmit. Headphones and earbuds can emit a maximum sound from 85 to 110 decibels (not far off from 120 decibels, the equivalent of the noise of a plane taking off a few meters away). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “among teenagers and young adults aged 12–35 years in middle- and high-income countries, nearly 50% are exposed to unsafe levels of sound from the use of personal audio devices.” Qustodio supports the WHO's recommendation of keeping volume settings below 85 decibels.

According to María Guerrero, an expert family psychologist at Qustodio, “In order to avoid these cyber-pathologies, preventive measures must be put into practice, such as: limiting the time in front of screens and establishing screen-free places at home, as well as for parents to lead by example by putting phones away at least 30 minutes before bedtime, getting outdoors and keeping volumes low. To help families in this difficult task, there are tools like Qustodio that are committed to digital wellbeing”.



About Qustodio

Qustodio is the world leader in online safety and digital wellbeing for families. Since 2012, our cross-platform parental control app and expert insights have helped parents around the world protect their children against online harm such as predators, cyberbullies and inappropriate content, while also helping them create healthy digital habits and awareness. With more than 2 million users, and accessible in 8 languages across +180 countries, Qustodio promotes the healthy use of technology, a safer internet, and open communication between parents and kids around the world.

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