

How to keep your gadgets from undermining your well-being

Tech Tune-Up

BY LISA COXON



FOR MANY OF US, it's rare to go a day without using an electronic device. These tools may improve our lives, but they can also compromise our health. Adopting beneficial habits will ensure your tech use is more helpful than harmful.

REMEMBER TO BLINK

When we stare at a screen, we blink less, which can cause dry, red eyes and blurred vision. "Consciously remembering to blink can help reduce those symptoms," says Dr. Cassandra Chung, a Toronto-based optometrist. To alleviate strain and help refocus, look away from your screen at a spot six and a half metres away every 20 minutes.

KEEP MOVING

Movement improves oxygen and blood flow to muscles, which is why sitting in the same position for

extended periods is unhealthy. "Clench your fist," says Dr. Daniel Zybutz, a chiropractor in Vancouver. "That's what your shoulder muscles do when you're at a desk with your head down." Taking a break every half-hour to walk around and stretch muscles for two to three minutes will help ease neck and shoulder pain.

DON'T DISTRACT YOURSELF

Some people find it agonizing to be disconnected from the online world—especially in public—but Dr. Peter Farvolden, a psychologist in Toronto, cautions against "obsessive monitoring." Constantly checking email and social media accounts on your hand-held device can be addictive. "A good way to determine if something is problematic," he says, "is to see if you can stop doing it." Try going without your phone for a day or more and gauge your response. **R**