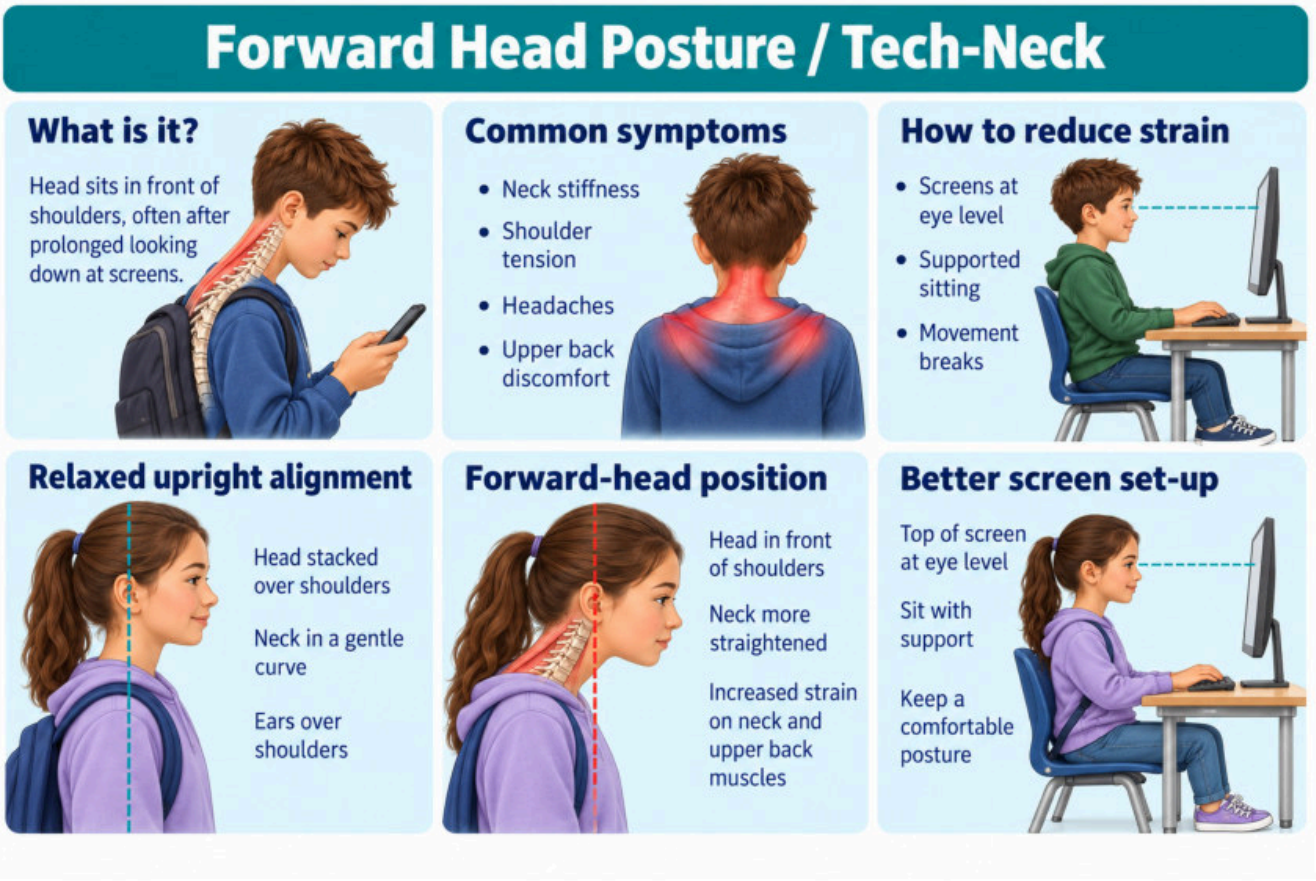
Forward Head Posture in Children

Tech-neck: understanding strain and improving habits

Forward Head Posture in Children

A guide to symptoms, treatment and self-management



Understanding forward head posture in children

Forward head posture (FHP), or “tech-neck”, means the head sits in front of the shoulders instead of directly above them. In children, long periods looking down at phones, tablets, laptops or gaming devices can contribute to neck and shoulder discomfort and stiffness.

Supporting your recovery

Symptoms usually improve with regular exercises, better ergonomic habits and reduced screen strain. Most children recover fully with these changes.

Understanding your condition

Symptoms, causes and when to seek advice

Common symptoms

- Neck pain or stiffness
- Tight shoulders, especially the upper trapezius muscles
- Headaches or upper back pain
- A “heavy” feeling in the head
- Reduced neck movement
- Pain worse after screen use
- Occasional arm tingling (less common)

Why does it happen?

- Long periods looking down at screens
- Poor desk or gaming posture
- Heavy school bags
- Weak neck and upper back muscles
- Too little movement or too few breaks

Is it serious?

Tech-neck usually improves with exercises, posture habits and activity changes, but can become persistent if not managed.

When to seek physio or medical advice

- Pain worsens despite 4-6 weeks of exercises
- Arm pain or tingling
- Frequent headaches
- Difficulty turning or lifting the head
- Posture worsens significantly

Recovery reminder

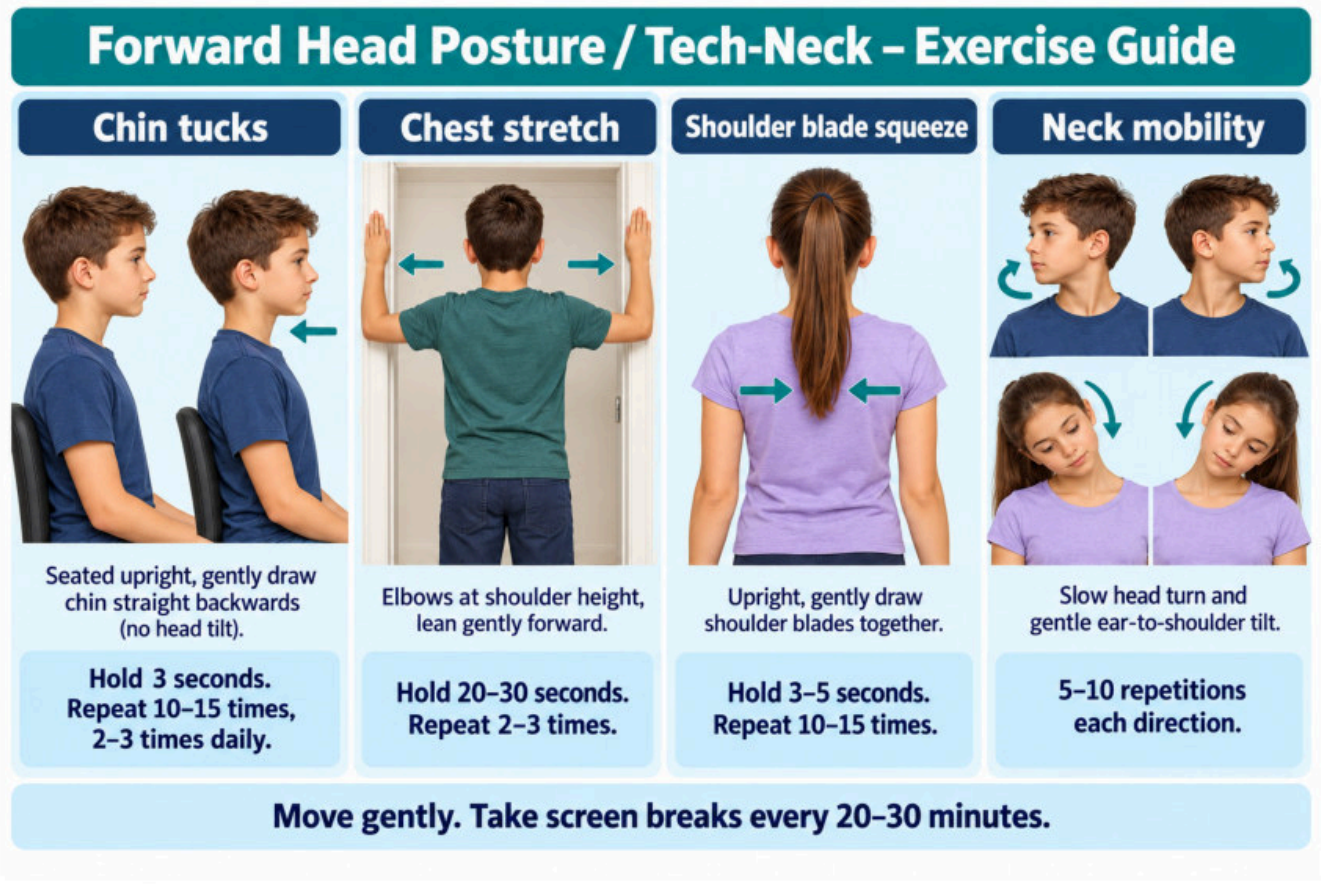
Symptoms usually improve with regular exercises, better ergonomic habits and reduced screen strain. Most children recover fully with these changes.

Exercises and rehabilitation

Gentle movements under professional guidance

Exercise examples

Help your child use gentle movements without forcing the neck. These exercises support posture, upper back strength and comfortable movement.



Exercise instructions

Chin tucks: draw chin back; hold 3 seconds; 10-15 repetitions, 2-3 times daily.
Chest stretch: doorway, elbows at shoulder height; 20-30 seconds, 2-3 times.
Shoulder blade squeeze: hold 3-5 seconds; repeat 10-15 times.
Neck mobility: turn left/right and tilt ear to shoulder; 5-10 each direction.

Exercise safely

Take screen breaks every 20-30 minutes. Seek advice for worsening symptoms, arm pain or tingling, frequent headaches or difficulty moving your head.

Management and next steps

Self-care, treatment and when to seek help

Reduce screen-related strain

- Hold phones at eye level
- Raise laptops or tablets on a stand
- Avoid devices while lying on a bed or sofa
- Take breaks every 20-30 minutes

Posture tips

- Keep ears aligned with shoulders and relax shoulders down
- Sit with feet flat on the floor
- Keep the screen at eye level
- Use a supportive chair when studying

Prevention

- Use laptop or tablet stands and regular movement breaks
- Consider a backpack with two straps
- Adjust study and gaming setups ergonomically
- Strengthen the upper back regularly

Questions or concerns?

Seek advice for your child's worsening pain after 4-6 weeks of exercises, arm pain or tingling, frequent headaches, difficulty moving the head or worsening posture.

Recovery outlook

Most children recover fully with regular exercise, improved ergonomic habits and reduced screen strain. Keep these habits part of your routine.

B-Well Physiotherapy Services

0300 303 4811

bwell.mskberkshire@nhs.net

www.bwellberkshire.co.uk