



## Is That Blackberry Causing You Pain?

We live in a world of information and technology. People of all ages and backgrounds are clicking away on a Blackberry, PDAs, or iPhones. These phones are very useful in helping us manage a calendar, surf the web, check email and text. But there is something no one is talking about. Using your phone too much can be a source of pain in your thumbs, wrists, forearms, even your neck!



That's right.

Most people work on their blackberries and cell phones with their thumbs (not using the fingers at all) and in a position that's not natural for the thumb and wrist joints. Therefore, after hours of improper positioning of the hand and wrist, ***it is not uncommon to feel aches and pains throughout the thumb region, with possible extensions into the wrist, forearms, even your neck.*** As a result, injuries such as "Blackberry thumb", carpal tunnel syndrome, or elbow pain can occur. In addition, looking down for a prolonged period of time can lead to neck pain.

### How can PDAs lead to overuse injuries?

The intention of spending 5 minutes checking your e-mail can easily turn into an hour browsing the web on the phone for some individuals. Your thumb, wrist, and neck have been held in the same unnatural position the entire time. Before long, your thumb(s) have been typing in an awkward position that they start hurting. Your wrists have been bent over and tendonitis can set in. Your neck aches from looking down at your Blackberry for a long time.

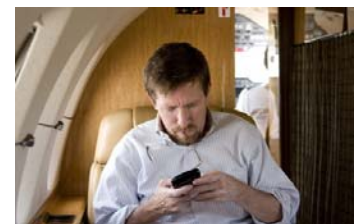
**The key here: Listen to your body!** If there's any pain, stop what you're doing and rest!

If you've already started to feel the effects of excessive blackberry use, call your therapist today.

## The Aches and Pains of the Blackberry...

If you spend a lot of time on your PDA, you should be aware of the signs of overuse.

- In the early stages, expect general aches and pains.
- Tightness in the muscles within and surrounding the joint (thumb, wrist, or neck) slowly worsen over time.
- If not addressed, pain continues to persist and is more constant throughout the day.



So, what do you do to prevent any short-term or long-term injury?

- The number one solution is REST! Rest your thumbs (after all it's the fingers that are meant to do the typing, not your thumbs).
- Take frequent breaks while doing a lot of texting or e-mailing. Your body cannot heal if it is constantly subject to the same activity. So be sure to stretch your hands and wrists frequently.
- Give your neck a rest by looking up and bending sideways, stretching every 5-10 minutes. Ask your therapist what the best stretches are for your hands, wrists, and neck.

## Preventing The Woes Of The Blackberry

If you find yourself suffering from the aches and strains after prolonged use of your PDA, our qualified staff can help to alleviate some of the related discomfort. In addition to pain relief, we can also teach you the best way to position your thumbs, hands, wrists, and neck to prevent further injury.

### Word of Caution:

Prevention is the best medicine. Here are some tips from our team:

- Take frequent breaks – rest after every 10-15 minutes. Periodically look up, giving your neck a break from looking down
- Hold the Blackberry a little higher to decrease the amount of stress on the neck (so you don't have to look down as much)
- Write fewer and shorter messages
- Try to keep your wrists straight when holding your Blackberry from both sides
- Alternate typing between fingers to give your thumbs a break
- Consider using a portable ergonomic keyboard for your PDA, especially if you travel a lot and are typing consistently.
- Make sure that you keep your hands, wrists and arms at the proper angles to prevent other injuries from developing.

Don't hesitate to call or visit our office before your hands, wrists and neck suffer any further. By now, you probably know that a little human care and intervention from our team is exactly what you need in an increasingly technology-driven society.

**Tip of the Day:** Limit messages to 1-2 messages and no more than 10 minutes at a time.