

(A)

The thumb generation

Cell phones are as important to teenagers as the clothes they wear. They take, send, and receive photos... They instant message ... They surf online video sites ... They email people ... They download ringtones and music ... They play games ...!

Children who grow up using mobile phones and gaming consoles are changing the shape of their fingers and thumbs, experts say. A whole generation born after 1985 uses thumbs to do things which in the past other generations did with their fingers, for example to point or ring doorbells. The phenomenon is so common in Japan that young people there are now called the 'thumb generation'. And it is not only a trend in Japan.

Just look at the next texting teenager that you see anywhere in your country. Many young people have grown up using devices where the thumb is used for keying in text messages and emails and for using the internet. Dr Sandra Grant of Warwick University says: "The relationship between technology and the users of technology is interesting. We have noticed that older people use their fingers to type in text messages, but younger people use both thumbs. And many of them can type in a text without looking at the keys."

The negative side of this is that the extra stress on the thumbs can lead to painful injuries. In fact, in Britain, where about 100 million text messages are sent everyday, about 3.8 million people suffer from 'Blackberry thumb' or Text Message Injury (TMI). This can mean pains in the thumbs, fingers, arms, or shoulders, and you can damage your fingers, hands, or arms for life. So, if you want to avoid TMI, here is some advice:

- If texting starts to hurt, stop and make a phone call instead.
- Don't use the same hand all the time.
- Don't text for more than a few minutes without a break.

But TMI will not be a problem for future generations. Scientists say that with time the body will change, and people will be born with stronger thumbs.



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