Repetitive Motion Injuries in the Manufacturing Industry Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Injuries resulting from tasks that require a high level of repetitive motion, also known as Repetitive Motion Injuries (RMI), can be very debilitating. These types of injuries are also referred to as cumulative trauma disorders (CTD) or repetitive motion disorders and are injuries to the musculoskeletal and nervous systems.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

DANGERS OF REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES

Common RMI include carpal tunnel syndrome, bursitis, and tendonitis, along with all manner of upper and lower body musculoskeletal injuries. Any job that involves repetitive motions is at risk, such as:

- Welders
- Automotive manufacturing
- Construction
- Aerospace manufacturing
- Food processing
- Electrician
- Shipbuilding
- Coal mining
- Solar installation
- Assembly line workers
- Logistics, fulfillment, and shipping
- Cake decorators
- Seamstresses and tailors

- Hairdressers
- Cashiers

Symptoms of RSI can include any of the following:

- Burning, aching, or shooting pain
- Tremors, clumsiness
- Tingling, numbness in the hands and arms
- Fatigue or lack of strength
- loss of sensation in the fingers, or whiteness in the tips
- Weakness in the hands or forearms

Common Causes of Repetitive Motion Injury

- Working in static or awkward (as opposed to neutral & relaxed) positions, for extended periods.
- Performing repetitive tasks, too often, too quickly or for too long (repetitive tasks are defined as tasks that have a cycle of less than 30 seconds, or that require the same set of movements more than 50% of the time).
- Applying excessive force to lift, move, grip, use, or twist an object.
- Operating vibrating tools, equipment, or machinery.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

PREVENT INJURIES – RISK ASSESSMENT

The first step in preventing any injury is identifying the hazards or potential hazards associated with the task, followed by completing a risk assessment.

Other Steps to Reduce/Prevent RMI

- Maintain good body posture.
- Periodic walk-through surveys, or whenever a job task changes.
- Complete a job analysis for all “at risk” positions.
- Train employees with an ergonomic professional or health care provider.
- Report early signs and symptoms of a complication to a

manager.
- Encourage employees to take micro-breaks and stretch.
- Implement a job rotation schedule.
- Use mechanical assists and implement engineering controls wherever possible.
- Try to eliminate or reduce overtime work.

BEST GENERAL PRACTICES TO PREVENT RMI IN THE WORKPLACE

- Maintain good posture.
- Ensure correct lifting technique.
- Ensure equipment is adequate and well fitted.
- Take regular breaks when performing repetitive tasks.
- Work at a steady pace.
- Adjust your position / break from an activity as soon as you begin to experience pain or strain.
- Regular change of positions where feasible.
- Train in the safest way to complete the task.
- Education on stretching and strengthening programs specific to the role.
- Wear appropriate anti-vibration gloves when operating handheld power tools.
- Use the latest power tool technology and ensure equipment is well maintained.
- Use tools that are fit for purpose and using them in the way they were intended.
- Warm up prior to performing high risk activities when working in temperatures below 16 °C.

FINAL WORD

You shouldn’t ignore your symptoms. The longer a repetitive-motion injury goes without treatment, the worse your prognosis and symptoms may become.