Repetitive Motion Injuries – Preventing Repetitive Motion Injuries Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) result from damaged muscles, nerves, and tendons. Sometimes called repetitive motion injuries, repetitive stress injuries or repetitive motion disorders, these repetitive movements at work can lead to injuries. They can be some of the most expensive and debilitating work-related injuries.

Workers are more likely to be injured due to repetitive tasks over a long period than they are a sudden trauma.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

CAUSES OF RMI

RMI is related to the overuse of muscles and tendons in the upper body. Certain things increase the risk of RMI.

- repetitive activities.
- doing a high-intensity activity for a long time without rest.
- poor posture or activities that involve working in an awkward position.

RMI SYMPTOMS. Symptoms of RSI can range from mild to severe and usually develop gradually.

- pain, aching or tenderness.
- stiffness
- throbbing
- tingling or numbness
- weakness
- cramp

INDUSTRIES MOST AT RISK FOR RMI.

- **Manufacturing positions**, including packaging and assembly workers
- **Sewing positions,** including seamstresses and tailors.
- **Retail positions**, including cashiers and shelf stockers.
- **Health service workers**, including lab workers and nurses.
- **Entertainment workers**, including dancers and musicians.
- **Office workers**, including those who type, file, or use a computer regularly.
- **Construction workers**, including those who sand, lay bricks or are on computers frequently.
- **Food preparation workers,** including meat cutters or cake decorators.
- **Transportation related jobs**, including bus drivers or taxi drivers.

INJURIES ASSOCIATED WITH REPETITIVE MOTION OR CUMULATIVE TRAUMA IN THE WORKPLACE

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tendinitis
- Bursitis
- Hearing loss
- Back injuries
- Neck injuries
- Shoulder injuries
- Degenerative disc disease
- Rotator cuff injuries
- Tenosynovitis
- Epicondylitis
- Emotional injury
- Hand or wrist pain
- Knee injuries

The most common work-related repetitive motion and overuse injuries involve the wrists, elbows, and hands due to repetitive keyboard activities (typing, clicking, and mousing). If the work station is non-ergonomic or the worker goes too many hours without a break, it can cause a nerve entrapment syndrome such as carpal

tunnel syndrome or epicondylitis (tennis elbow). Mechanics who perform overhead work and constantly use their hands are also prone to repetitive motion and overuse injuries, as are production workers, carpenters, welders, masons, warehouse workers, and picker/packers.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

REPETITIVE MOTION INJURY PREVENTION – Design Ergonomic, Adjustable Workstations.

- Raise or lower your desk, chair, or computer screen to get the top of your screen at or slightly below eye level. The screen should be easily viewed without straining your neck forward.
- Use a document holder to position papers at the same level as the screen.
- Your neck should be straight with your head centered above your spine. Have your arms bent roughly at 90-degree angles with your wrists and hands straight or in a neutral position.
- Your spine should have its normal curve supported with your feet resting in a relaxed position on the floor.
- Use wrist rests, telephone headsets, back supports, to relieve strain on arms, neck, and back.
- Try to keep your hands, arms, and shoulders loose and relaxed. It’s important to do stretching exercises before and after long typing periods. Stretch your fingers, wrists, arms, and shoulders frequently.
- The more force used, either constantly or on impact, while typing it is likely straining a muscle or sprain a tendon.
- Sit up straight. Make sure your chair supports your spine in an upright position.
- Never rest your wrists on the desk, wrist pad or armrests while you are typing or using a mouse.
- Pace yourself. Take a five- to 10-minute break every half hour or less.
- Get plenty of regular, vigorous exercise.
- Do appropriate upper body strengthening exercises.

- Stretch frequently while at the computer.
- Reduce time at the computer if you are experiencing pain, fatigue, or soreness.

REPETITIVE MOTION INJURY TAKEAWAY

All employees involved in any sort of prolonged exposure to one task should take a break every two hours.

FINAL WORD

Whether you are a business owner, an office manager, or oversee ergonomics for your company, it’s important to give employees tips and tools on how to prevent injury and empower them to make the changes they need.