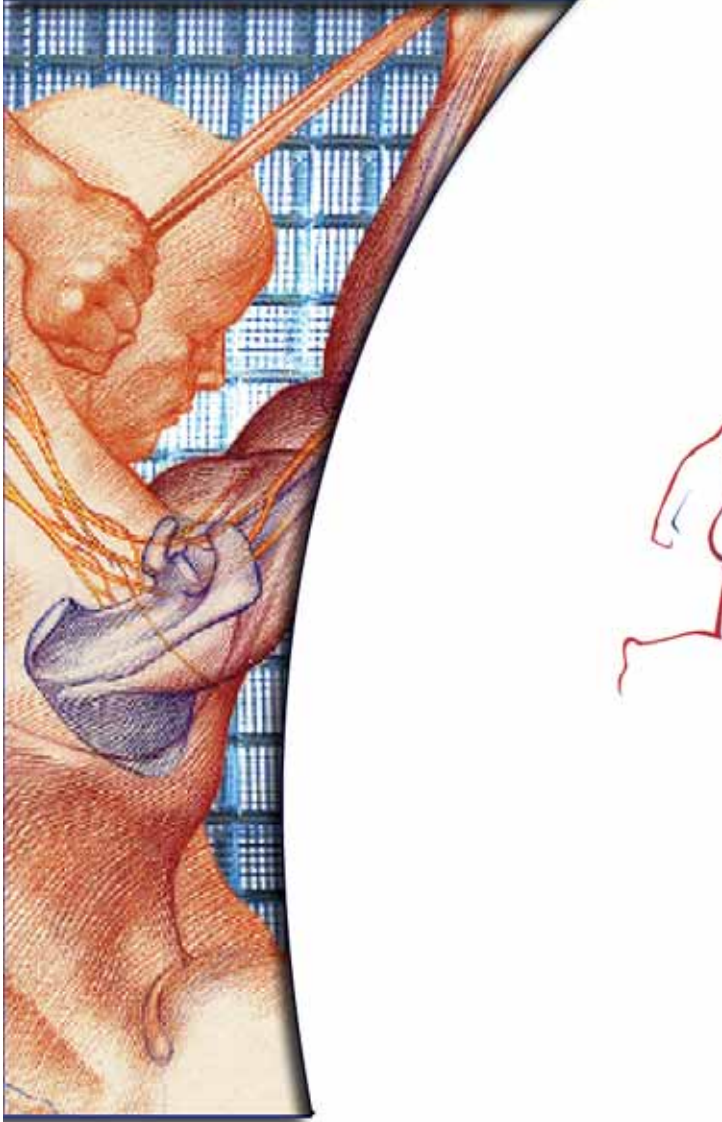


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OTTAWA VALLEY
PHYSIOTHERAPY



Office Ergonomics and Repetitive Strain Injuries

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) is a common term used to describe injuries induced by the daily wear and tear of a repetitive motion. According to Statistics Canada, one out of every 10 Canadian adults have had a repetitive strain injury. An estimated 2.3 million people aged 20 or older have suffered from such an injury within the past 12 months. RSI is a soft tissue injury, meaning that muscles, tendons and nerves subjected to daily wear and tear result in symptoms such as pain, numbness, tingling and swelling.

Three Stages of RSI

Stage 1

Symptoms of aching and tenderness persist only during activity and settle at rest. There is no significant reduction in work performance and physical signs are minimal.

Stage 2

Symptoms start earlier and persist longer. They do not settle at rest and may disturb sleep. There is a reduced capacity for repetitive work and physical signs are present.

Stage 3

Symptoms persist at rest. Pain occurs with non-repetitive movements and causes sleep disturbance. Physical signs are significant.

Common RSI injuries that affect Office Workers

- ✓ Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- ✓ Tennis and Golfer's Elbow
- ✓ Rotator Ruff Tendonitis
- ✓ Tension Neck Syndrome/Headaches

Keys to the successful treatment of RSI injuries

- ✓ Early recognition
- ✓ Early treatment
- ✓ Stretching
- ✓ Elimination of aggravating factors

**** RSI does not resolve itself "on its own". Early intervention is the key ****

Ottawa Valley Physiotherapy can help!

Treating the RSI

- ✓ Physiotherapy will identify and remedy **contributing factors** associated with the injury
- ✓ Physiotherapy will help **decrease the pain** and swelling
- ✓ Physiotherapy will teach you how to **prevent** recurrent RSI's
- ✓ Physiotherapy will teach you how to make your **work station fit** you best
- ✓ Physiotherapy will help to improve your functioning at work and at home
- ✓ Massage therapy can also help reduce muscle tension

Ergonomic Assessment

We can perform an ergonomic evaluation of workstations to determine what modifications are required. The goal of this evaluation is to adjust stations so that users can perform to their maximum and avoid developing injuries or discomfort. Please give us a call for further details.

GENERAL EXERCISES TO PREVENT RSI!



1. Sit up straight in a chair and look directly ahead of you. Pull your chin in towards your throat without tilting your head down. Hold five seconds and return your head to the original position.



2. Sit up straight in a chair and look directly ahead of you. Tilt your head toward the side so as to bring your ear down to your shoulder until you feel a gentle stretch on the opposite side of your neck. Return to start position.

3. Sit or stand up straight, shrug your shoulders so as to bring them up towards your ears. Return to original position. Repeat 10 times. You can add gentle and slow rolling of your shoulders in forward and backward circles. Perform five times each.



4. Sit or stand up straight and look directly ahead of you. Keep your shoulders relaxed and gently squeeze your shoulder blades down and together. Hold for five seconds and repeat 10 times.

5. Sit or stand up straight and look directly ahead of you. Keep your right elbow straight.

a. Use your left hand to bend your right wrist backwards as far as you can until you feel a stretch in your wrist and/or forearm. Hold 20 seconds and repeat three times each side.



b. Use your left hand to bend your right wrist forwards as far as you can until you feel a stretch in your wrist and/or forearm. Hold 20 seconds and repeat three times each side.



6. Stand up straight with your feet slightly apart. Place your hands in the small of your back with the fingers pointing backward. Bend your trunk backward at the waist as far as you can, keeping your knees straight. Hold for 3 seconds, and return to the starting position.

General Principles of RSI Prevention

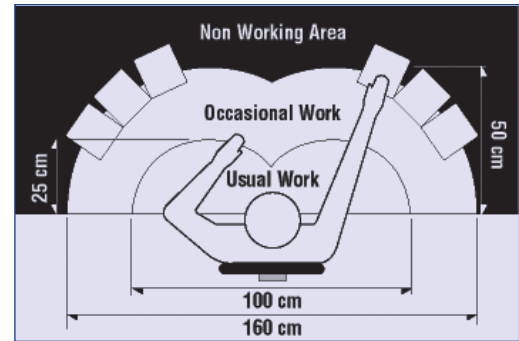
- ✓ Avoid awkward postures. Periodically stretch, rest or change activities
- ✓ Let arms and hands relax between movements
- ✓ Avoid using excessive force (type softly)

- ✓ Plan workflow. Break up physically demanding or repetitive tasks with less demanding tasks
- ✓ Exercise to increase fitness and reduce stress
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate mouse use

Setting Up Your Workstation to Reduce the Risk of Repetitive Strain Injury

Desk Set-Up

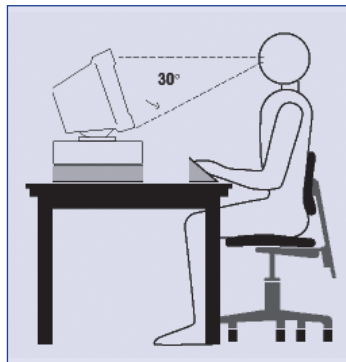
To decrease the amount of unnecessary reaching and potential strain on shoulders, neck and back, reserve the area closest to you for objects and work that you use regularly. Occasionally used objects and work may be placed within a comfortable reach. Avoid twisting your body to reach objects



Computer Set-Up

Monitor

To reduce eye strain and prevent neck and shoulder muscle tension, adjust your monitor appropriately. The top of your screen should be at eye level. Your monitor should be at least one arms length. Occasionally focus on an object 15 feet away to prevent eye strain.

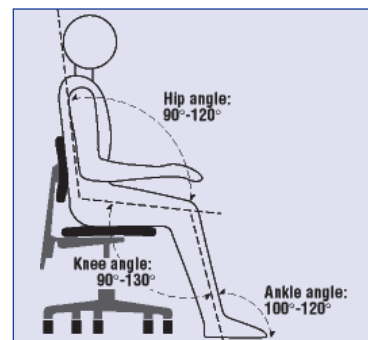


Keyboard and Mouse

Place your mouse on the same surface as the keyboard. Adjust the keyboard so there is a 90 degree bend at the elbows and your forearms are parallel to the floor. If the keyboard is not adjustable, adjust the height of the chair so the arms are in the proper position and use a footrest if necessary. Use a wrist rest to support the wrist in a neutral position

Chair Set-up

Adjust your chair to promote good posture and assist blood flow to the legs. Adjust the backrest so that the lumbar support fits into the curvature of your lower back. Your seat height should allow your thighs to be horizontal and your feet flat on the floor. Arrests should be adjusted to support the elbows at 90 degrees.



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