



Repetitive Strain Injuries

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Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI) is the catch phrase for ascribing spinal, upper and lower limb pains caused by repetitive motions.

The prevalence of RSI in the past decade has escalated in the office environment due to increased dependence on computers.

Injuries occur over time and may take a few weeks to years due to repeated stress on soft tissue (muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves).

Some conditions that are associated with RSI are:

- carpal tunnel syndrome,
- tendonitis (i.e. tennis and golfer's elbow and low back pain).

However, often an individual complains of vague, varied and non-specific aches and that may make an accurate diagnosis difficult. It is important to note that if a person feels intermittent or persistent pain and/or strain without a traumatic event, this is suggestive of an RSI.

If treated early the individual usually returns rapidly to normal function. If left untreated, the symptoms may become more severe and become more chronic. This is why prevention and early intervention are so important.

The following signs and symptoms may indicate your need to seek assistance from a health professional:

- You frequently feel the need to massage your hands, back, neck or arm, to try to "work out" the tightness and pain.
- You avoid using the injured arm/hand.
- You find yourself shaking out your hands because they have become numb.
- You feel overly protective of your hands, arms, neck or back.
- You notice your hand or arms tingle or "burn".
- You find it hard or more difficult to perform regular activities such as brushing your teeth or hair, reading a book or newspaper, chopping food, carrying groceries, getting dressed, opening cars or doors, or sitting and standing for long periods of time.

Physiotherapists are 'Specialists' at treating RSI. Physiotherapy treatment of RSI includes education on how and why we develop RSI and on how to avoid RSI through ergonomic and postural tips.

Modalities such as ultrasound and interferential current can also aid in the healing process. Hands-on treatment will aid in pain relief and maximize conditions for tissue healing. Injury specific therapy such as massage or mobilization exercises and general conditioning advice can also be useful as a part of a comprehensive treatment program.

