Repetitive Strain Injuries Meeting Kit

CAUSES OF RSI

Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI) is not one diagnosis, but rather an umbrella term for disorders such as Bursitis, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, tennis elbow, tendonitis, and trigger finger. Also known as Cumulative Trauma Disorder, RSIs are caused by constantly repeated physical movements, awkward postures and sustained force, among other risk factors. These repetitive motions damage the soft body tissues (tendon, cartilage, nerves, ligaments, and muscles) that are involved in producing the motion. RSI is a painful and potentially debilitating condition that if left untreated, can lead to permanent damage.

Symptoms of RSI

- Pain or tenderness
- Stiffness or joint restriction
- Tingling or numbness
- Cramping
- Swelling in the hands or forearms
- Referred pain – where the pain is felt in a different part of the body to the one that is injured.

There are Two Main Types of RSI:

Type 1– pain is the result of a recognized medical condition such as tendonitis, cellulitis or carpal tunnel syndrome.

Type 2– no specific diagnosis can be made, and the injury is often referred to as non-specific upper limb pain or diffuse RSI.

SIGNIFICANT RISK FACTORS

- carrying out repetitive tasks for long periods without suitable rest breaks
- poor posture or activities that require you to work in an awkward position
- poor working environment setup

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

- Studies have shown that the onset of repetitive motion injuries may be affected by factors like work satisfaction.
- People who experience high amounts of psychological stress at work are more likely to develop repetitive motion injuries than those who don’t experience high amounts of stress.

OCCUPATIONS AT RISK/DANGER

- Office work (such as typing and clerical duties)
- Process work (such as assembly line and packing duties)
- Piece work (such as sewing)
- Manual work (such as bricklaying and carpentry)

RSI PREVENTION

Good Ergonomics

The best way to avoid repetitive strain injuries is to implement good ergonomics in your workplace. Ergonomics is a science concerned with designing and arranging things people use to avoid occupational injury.

The following can help prevent repetitive strain injuries:

- Report early symptoms before they get worse
- Ease back into work after a vacation
- Maintain good general health and fitness
- Take regular breaks

TREATMENT FOR RSI MINOR REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES

- Rest
- Ice packs
- Over-the-counter pain relievers

FOR REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURIES THAT ARE MORE SERIOUS, THE FOLLOWING MAY BE NECESSARY:

- Physical rehabilitation.
- A surgical procedure that can improve tendon health.

BEST PRACTICES TO PREVENT RSI USING STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- resting your feet flat on the floor, or on a footrest
- sitting central to the curve on any curved desk
- placing your screen at eye level and directly in front of you
- having your keyboard directly in front of you, with a space at the front of the desk to rest your wrists.
- positioning your mouse as close to you as possible so you can use it with your wrist straight.
- using a ‘compact’ keyboard without a number pad so that the mouse can be brought in closer still.
- avoiding reflections from overhead lighting and sunlight.
- using a document holder, to avoid bending your neck – position this centrally to also avoid twisting.
- touch typing, to spread the load
- using predictive text and auto-correct features, to reduce keystrokes
- learning common keyboard shortcuts, to reduce the use of the mouse
- slowing your mouse down, to reduce muscle tension.

FINAL WORD

As with any hazards, RSIs are best eliminated at the source which, in this case, is the repetition of the tasks performed. Prevention of these injuries should focus on eliminating repetitive work through job design which may involve mechanizing certain tasks. In addition, jobs should be structured so that workers can rotate between

various tasks where they do something completely different, using different muscles groups.