



Repetitive Motion

Repetitive strain injury is general terminology used to describe the sensation of pain in muscles, tendons and nerves due to repeated movements, vibrations or being in continually uncomfortable and awkward postures. It is very common that these injuries are overlooked or just misunderstood as workers may believe that repetitive movements are merely tedious but cause no harm in the long term. However, this would be untrue as injuries can include ligament tears, trapped nerves, hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) and tendonitis.

Contributing Factors

- **Repetition, length of work and speed of which one must work** – having to use the same body positions throughout the day, such as bending over or being required to strike awkward movements.
- **Excessive exertion** – forceful movements can lead to workers that are dealing with strained or torn muscles when tired, this is commonly from tasks that involve a great deal of pushing, pulling, carrying objects or striking frequently.
- **Handling objects** – large objects which are difficult to move, including handling poorly designed tools which eventually leads to pain.
- **Contact stress** – perpetual pressure from hard surfaces or a sharp edge pressed against a part of the body, this is common with office work due to edges of a desk contacting the arms or wrist.
- **Vibration** – caused by machinery and tools that vibrate continually when in use. This causes nerve damage and causes the person affected to lose the feeling in their arms and hands over time.
- **Workspace of poor design** – requirement to carry heavy objects over a long distance or other tasks which are unnecessary.
- **Organization and work of poor design** – low availability of breaks between tasks, a work pace that is too quick to be sustained and low amount of task variation.

Preventing Repetitive Strain Injury

- Ensure that workers are using tools which are comfortable and easy to use.
- Using tools which reduce vibration, such as anti-vibration tools or gloves. Thus, reducing damage to the nerves.
- Rests at intervals can be used to avoid issues surrounding vibration and repetitive movements.
- Tools should be in good condition, tools that are poorly kept or damaged will often cause excessive vibration or require extra force to use them.
- Work areas should be organized to reduce the need for overextending and bending.
- Mechanical handling systems should be used where applicable to reduce lifting and carrying.
- Do not attempt to lift an object which is extremely heavy. Either reduce the object or load weight, ask for aid, or attain mechanical aids.
- Reduce the force of grip and pressure.
- Attempt to avoid continually uncomfortable body positions.
- Where possible, power tools should be used in place of hand tools as hand tools require more force and repetition.
- Safe lifting practices should be enforced.