Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness

Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day

The international Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day is February 28, 2026. This day is dedicated to increasing awareness about RSIs, a broad category of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) that affect the tendons, muscles, nerves, and joints in areas such as the neck, back, shoulders, arms, and hands. For more information visit: https://www.ccohs.ca/events/rsi .

Working in the same position or posture for long periods can lead to discomfort and may contribute to the development of RSIs or MSDs. If you begin to feel discomfort, it's a signal from your body that it is time to move, stretch, or adjust your posture. If discomfort becomes routine during your regular work tasks, you may benefit from treatment. WCB PEI provides Direct Access to physiotherapy and chiropractic care for work-related sprain and strain injuries, allowing workers to seek early assessment and treatment. Visit https://www.wcb.pe.ca/DirectAccess for more information.

Causes, Symptoms and Risk Factors

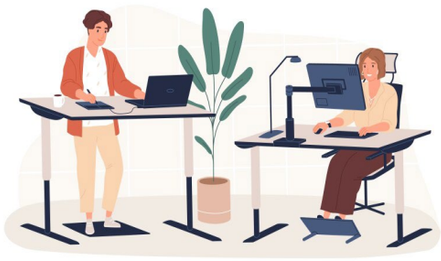
RSIs and MSDs develop when the same movements or activities are performed repeatedly without adequate breaks, stretching, or changes in posture. These repetitive motions can strain and damage muscles, tendons, and nerves, leading to pain and reduced mobility.

Common symptoms include muscle tenderness, stiffness, redness, swelling, and sensations such as numbness or "pins and needles." RSIs/MSDs can also lead to more serious conditions such as tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tennis elbow.

Several factors increase the risk of developing RSIs, such as maintaining sustained or awkward postures, performing tasks that require excessive force or engaging in repetitive tasks without rest. The body areas most frequently affected include the shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, fingers or thumbs, and knees.

Injury Data

One in 10 Canadians workers experience a form of RSI/MSD annually. WCB PEI's 2023 Annual Report statistics indicate that 56.1% of time loss claims experienced by PEI workers in 2023 were a result of sprain, strain or tear injuries.



Prevention

Taking proactive steps can significantly reduce the risk of developing RSIs and MSDs. Incorporate the following practices into your daily routine:

- **Movement:** Change your posture regularly and avoid staying in the same position for extended periods. Rotating between tasks helps reduce strain on the same muscle groups.
- **Microbreaks:** Take 2–3 one-minute microbreaks each hour to stretch, walk, or gently move your body. These short breaks help relax muscles and promote circulation.
- **Ergonomics:** Practice recommended ergonomic techniques when performing daily tasks. Adjust your workstation and equipment to support neutral posture and reduce unnecessary strain.
- **Assessment/Evaluation:** Regularly assess your work area and tasks to ensure they follow ergonomic guidelines. Making small adjustments early can prevent long-term injury.
- **Education/Training**: Participate in ergonomics or safe-lifting training specific to your job. Training opportunities are available through Pathways to Learning under the "OHS" section.

Resources

- Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines
- IWH: Office Ergonomics Training Module
- CCOHS: Stretching
- CCOHS: Sitting at Work Infographic
- WCB: Safe Lifting Techniques

Adapted from: CCOHS, WCB & Government of Canada

Updated: February 2026

Musculoskeletal Disorders

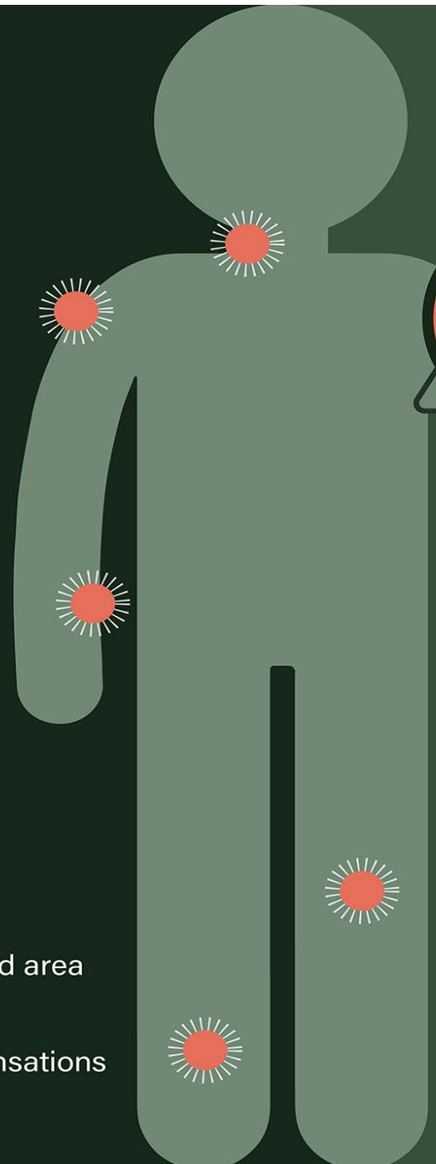
Painful disorders of muscles, tendons, and nerves that develop over time from tasks that repeatedly cause stress and injury to tissues.

Common causes

- **Material handling**: injuries due to repeated lifting, pushing and pulling
- **Workstation design**: poor match between worker and furniture, equipment, and layout
- **Repetitive motion injuries**: risk factors due to awkward body motions, and tools
- **Inadequate job design**: pace of work, production pressure, lack of sufficient time to recover from work

Watch for symptoms

- Pain
- Joint stiffness
- Muscle tightness
- Redness
- Swelling of the affected area
- Numbness
- "Pins and needles" sensations
- Skin colour changes



What workplaces can do

Hazards are best eliminated at the source. Focus on eliminating repetitive patterns of work through job design changes:

- Automating tasks
- Increasing the variety of tasks
- Moving between different tasks
- Distributing work more evenly

If elimination of repetitive patterns of work is not possible, focus on:

- **Workplace design**: fitting the workstation to the worker
- **Tool and equipment design**: providing tools that decrease the force needed and do not require awkward positions
- **Assistive devices**: using carts, hoists, or other mechanical handling devices
- **Work practices**: training workers, allowing rest periods, and giving workers more job control

Be aware of the causes and develop a prevention program. Educate and train workers, encourage early reporting of symptoms, and identify and control job-related risk factors.

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