

Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness

Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day – February 28, 2025

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day is recognized internationally on February 29 (February 28 in non-leap years) and deliberately held on the only non-repetitive day of the year. The purpose of RSI Awareness Day is to promote awareness of injuries as a result of RSIs. RSIs is an umbrella term used to describe musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as those affecting tendons, muscles, nerves and joints in the neck, upper and lower back, chest, shoulders, arms and hands. For more information visit:

<https://www.ccohs.ca/events/rsi>

Working in one position/posture for long periods of time can cause discomfort and eventually lead to RSIs/MSDs. If you feel discomfort, your body is telling you it is time to move, stretch or adjust positions. If you are routinely experiencing discomfort while conducting regular work duties, you may benefit from treatment. WCB PEI offers direct access to physiotherapy and chiropractor therapy for work-related sprain and strain injuries. Visit <https://www.wcb.pe.ca/DirectAccess> for more information.

Causes, Symptoms and Risk Factors

RSIs and MSDs are injuries and disorders caused by conducting the same motion or activity repeatedly without breaks or stretching.

Repetitive motion can cause damage to your muscles, tendons and nerves resulting in pain. Other associated symptoms include muscle tenderness, stiffness, redness and swelling, as well as “pins and needles” sensation. RSIs/MSDs can also lead to more serious conditions such as tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tennis elbow.

Factors that increase the risk of RSIs include sustained postures, working in awkward postures and excessive force such as lifting a heavy object. Body parts most commonly affected include shoulders, arms, elbows, wrists, fingers/thumbs, and knees.



Prevention

To prevent RSIs and MSDs, incorporate:

- **Movement** – Adjust your position and posture frequently and rotate between repetitive tasks.
- **Microbreaks** – Incorporate 2 to 3, one-minute microbreaks each hour to stretch, take a walk, move around, and relax your body.
- **Ergonomics** – Practice appropriate ergonomic techniques when conducting daily activities.
- **Assessment/Evaluation** – Conduct a self-assessment to ensure work tasks and workstations follow ergonomic guidelines.
- **Education/Training** – Participate in office ergonomics training or safe lifting and moving training specific to your work tasks. Training opportunities are available through [Pathways to Learning](#) under the “OHS” section and in the resources listed below.

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.

Resources

- **Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines**
<https://csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/adults-18-64/>
- **Office Ergonomics Training Module**
<http://www.iwh.on.ca/archive/eofficeergo/index.html>
- **Stretching**
<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/office/stretching.html>
- **Sitting at Work Infographic**
https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/infographics/download/Sitting_at_Work.jpg
- **Safe Lifting Techniques**
https://www.wcb.pe.ca/DocumentManagement/Document/pub_posterrulesofliftingposter.pdf



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.