

## Repetitive Strain Injury and Your Employment

Repetitive Strain Injury is also known as cumulative trauma disorder (CTD), which is just one of many different names associated with Repetitive Strain Injury. The effect of Repetitive Strain Injury comes as the result of overusing a tool such as a computer, guitar or knife; basically any activity that requires repeated movements. Repetitive Strain Injury affects your muscles, tendons and nerves in your hands, arms and upper back.

Repetitive Strain Injury is a medically accepted condition, which occurs when muscles in your hands, arms and upper back are kept tense for long periods of time due to poor posture and repetitive motions. Some people also believe that stress is a main cause of Repetitive Strain Injury rather than it just being a contributing factor this is because of aspects such as job demands, poor support from colleagues and work dissatisfaction may cause an employee to work harder without realising the potential damage that they could be causing through Repetitive Strain Injury.

The effects of Repetitive Strain Injury may take months, even years to develop and in many cases starts with a slight ache that gradually gets worse. Once the problem of Repetitive Strain Injury has started the problem can get that bad that severe pain may be felt most of the time, even with only the slightest movement.

Anyone whose job involves repetitive movements is at risk of developing Repetitive Strain Injury. The risk is increased by spending long periods of time without a break or sitting on an uncomfortable chair. The symptoms of Repetitive Strain Injury can often vary from person to person but the most common three include pain, numbness and tingling; you also may find it difficult to hold objects. If you start to feel any of the following then it may be indicating the onset of Repetitive Strain Injury:

- Recurring pain (myalgia) or soreness in neck, shoulders, upper back, wrists or hands.
- Tingling, numbness, coldness or loss of sensation.
- Loss of grip strength, lack of endurance, weakness.
- Muscles in the arms and shoulders feel hard and wiry when palpated.
- Pain or numbness while lying in bed. Often early stage RSI sufferers mistakenly think they are lying on their arms in an awkward position cutting off circulation

In many, if not all cases of Repetitive Strain Injury the treatment that you will receive will be given so that it targets all the major areas of your body that may be affected i.e. arms and upper back. So how exactly can Repetitive Strain Injury be prevented? When you are working in an environment that requires you to perform repetitive motions there are a few things that you can do that will reduce your risk of Repetitive Strain Injury such as warming up and cooling down your muscles, taking regular breaks throughout the day, having an appropriate workstation and a good seating position.

The treatment of Repetitive Strain Injury includes taking painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs as well as using heat and cold packs and elastic wrist supports or firm wrist splints. You may also require acupuncture, physiotherapy or osteopathy in extreme cases.

### About the Author

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