

Safety Alert – Overuse Injuries

Number 15-04

1 BACKGROUND

So far in 2015 five University staff have required ongoing medical treatment for Overuse Injuries. An Overuse injury is common to fingers, hands, wrists and elbows and is also known as repetitive strain injury or RSI. It is caused by repetitive movements or awkward postures. Overuse injuries generally occur from:

- ✳ **Repetition** - Repeated motions of a body part
- ✳ **Poor Workstation Ergonomics** – incorrect placement of mouse, keyboard, monitors etc.
- ✳ **Awkward Posture** - Maintaining awkward body positions for a long time
- ✳ **Static Posture** - Holding parts of the body in one position for a long time

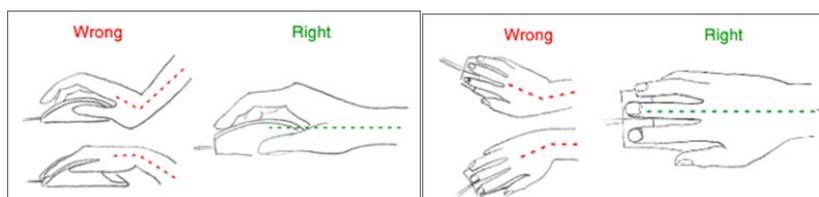
2 SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms include:

- ✳ Pain, swelling and inflammation
- ✳ Numbness or tingling sensation
- ✳ Decreased movement and stiffness of body part(s)
- ✳ **Symptoms worsen with time**

3 PREVENTION

- ✳ Take regular breaks from repetitive tasks. If your work is computer based, you should set yourself reminders to take breaks at regular intervals.
- ✳ Regularly stand up and stretch as well as stretching your arms and wrists and also straighten your fingers.
- ✳ It is important that you listen to your body. If you feel fatigued, take a break before you begin to experience any symptoms of overuse/repetitive strain.
- ✳ Ensure that your workstation is set up ergonomically. For more information and self-assessment refer to the [Workplace Ergonomics Handout](#)
- ✳ When seated attempt to retain a good posture (no slouching!) Ideally your head and back should form a straight line from your ears to your pelvis.
- ✳ When typing your wrists should not be bent to one side, try to keep them pointing in a straight line with your forearm.
- ✳ Try not to hit the keys on your keyboard too forcefully.
- ✳ Do not grip the computer mouse tightly and have it located close to your keyboard so you do not need to stretch.



For Further information and tips and tricks please refer to the **Safety At Work Page**

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-staff/working-here/work-health-and-safety/safety-at-work>