

LIBRARY RELATED REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURIES (RSI)

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Introduction

Most of us ignore the occasional, but annoying tenseness, tingling and pain in our finger, wrist, shoulders elbows, neck or back. One should not ignore these symptoms and warnings. Those may be a cause of repetitive strain injuries. If these symptoms are associated with repetitive

Tasks, such as stamping of due dates on the book cards, shelving of books, typing at a computer, it is RSI.

What is RSI?

RSI stands for Repetitive strain Injury/ies or Repetitive stress Injury/ies. It is a Skeletal umbrella term for 18 work related muscle disorders (WMSDS) or neuro-muscular disorders of the fingers, hands, wrists, arms, shoulders and neck repeated physical movements doing damage to tenders, nerves, muscles and other safe body Tissues. RSI can ever occur in young physically fit individuals. RSI's can make people permanently disabled to the extent that unable to perform everyday tasks such as dressing themselves.

Symptoms of RSI

The primary warning sign of RSI is pain in the upper extremities (fingers, palms, wrists, forearms, shoulders). The pain may be burning, aching, or shooting. It could be local (e.g., fingertips) or diffuse (e.g., the entire forearm). The pain will typically be increased after a long session of computer use. Keep in mind, however, you can have severe RSI without experiencing pain. The following checklist (adapted from Pascarelli and Quilter), can help you determine whether you have RSI:

Do you Experience:

- Fatigue or lack of endurance?
- Weakness in the hands or forearms?
- Tingling, numbness, or loss of sensation?
- Heaviness: Do your hands feel like dead weight?
- Clumsiness: Do you keep dropping things?
- Lack of strength in your hands? Is it harder to open jars? Cut vegetables?
- Lack of control or coordination?
- Chronically cold hands?
- Heightened awareness? Just being slightly more aware of a body part can be a clue that something is wrong.
- Hypersensitivity?
- Frequent self-massage (subconsciously)?
- Sympathy pains? Do your hands hurt when someone else talks about their hand pain?

In addition to these symptoms, RSI can also lead to behavioral changes. You may not even be aware of these changes. For example, do you:

- Avoid using the injured hand?
- Use your nondominant hand more frequently?

- Use your forearm, feet, or shoulder to open doors?
- Avoid wearing or buying certain kinds of clothing because it is too difficult to put them on?
- Change shopping habits because you can't carry as much as he wants could?
- Keep dropping things?
- Find you can't chop food?
- Not play sports you once enjoyed?
- Have trouble hooking bras or putting on jewelry?
- Not wear bracelets because your wrists are tender?
- Have trouble with keys or brushing teeth?
- Feel overly protective of your hands?

Causes of RSI

- Muscle tension
- Repetitive motion
- Over use
- Incorrect and statue posture

Library professional and RSI

The lifestyle of a modern library professional is sedentary. The nature of work involves repetitive functions. More & more library work involves application of computers.

Modern library profession is therefore full of RSI minefields. Every library professional needs to be aware of the causes, hazards, prevention and causes of library related Repetitive strain Injuries.

It is observed that back pains and neck pain is very common among libraries. In spite of these visible causes and symptoms hardly an attention has been given to documents the injuries caused by repetitive

functions of library staff thought much has been written on RSI's and computer related RSI's there is hardly an literature available on library related RSI.

Libraries activates involve repetitive use of the fingers, hand, wrists, arms, shoulders and neck. While searching online database & the internet, cataloguing books and special collection, coding markup language etc..

Low tech activities such as shelving hundreds and thousands of books, stamping the due date slips, the book cards and issuing of books, keyboarding of stacking books, ferrying book cards from one location to another, moving or rearranging bookshelves, and shelving book-after books can cause of RSIs.

Library Functions Involving Higher RSI Risk

As such, may Library functions are respective. Among them, the following are the areas involving greater RSI risks.

1. Circulation Desk.
 2. Shelving
 3. Library Computing & RSI
- Keyboarding
 - Mouse
 - Monitor & LCD

The Do's & Don't for Prevention of RSI's

General:

- Keep watch RSI warnings and symptoms
- Keep Moving. Get up from the desk and move around for 2 Minutes every half an hour
- Stretch and spread the fingers, stretch the palms, knees and toes periodically- at least every half an hour.
- Avoid using laptop wherever desktop computer is available,
- Do not talk with the phone on the shoulder.

Head & Neck:-

Head and Neck should be centered or Balanced over the chest and shoulders. Every slight tilting of head gives lot of stress.

Eye:-

- Avoid continuous watching of the screen.
- Adjust the monitor light to suit the eyes
- Use safety screens to avoid the monitor glare
- Keep the Font size more

Neck:-

- Use revolving chair and avoid fixed chair
- T should have 4 legs for stability
- Height should be adjustable.
- Armrests should be adjustable

Preventing RSI

As with all health-related issues, it is wise to eat well, exercise, listen to your body, and avoid destructive behavior. However, there are some specific precautions you can take to help prevent the onset of RSI.

Why bother?

When you first notice symptoms of RSI, you have already done substantial damage to yourself. RSI can take months, even years to develop, and you can expect it to take at least twice as long to heal. It has been several years since my RSI was at its worst, and even now I must limit my typing. Even if you feel no pain or other symptoms of RSI, you would do well to heed the following advice for RSI prevention, especially if you meet one of the risk factors outlined above.

Good Posture is Crucial

What is good posture? For our purposes here, good posture is when you are seated in such a way that the effort required to work at your computer is minimized. The following checklist identifies the proper way to sit in order to achieve good posture:

- Feet: flat on the floor
- Knees: directly over feet, bent at right angles (or slightly greater), with a couple inches of space from the chair
- Pelvis: rocked forward, sitting on the "sitz bones," with hips (the sockets where your femurs attach) positioned no lower than, and perhaps slightly higher than the knees.
- Lower back: arched in, and possibly supported by your chair or a towel roll.
- Upper back: naturally rounded
- Shoulders, arms: relaxed, at side.
- Neck: arched in, relaxed, supported by spine. Be careful not to hold tension in back or under chin.
- Head: balancing gently on top of spine.

There can be exceptions. For example, it's OK to shift your legs and feet around if they get figgety, but be sure to always keep the spine neutral and the head balanced above the pelvis.

Coping with RSI

An advanced case of RSI can cause a significant emotional burden. Because of your limited use of your hands, you'll constantly be asking other people for help just to get by in life. It can be quite challenging, for example, to ask someone you don't know to give up their seat on the bus for you because your hands are too weak to hold the hand rail. On the other hand, you will find that most people are willing to help you out in your time of need. Take advantage of close friends and mentors who would be willing to listen to your struggles, and help you sort out your feelings. Universities often have Counseling Centers that are free to students.

Conclusion:-

RSI is life altering injury, easier to prevent than to cure software professionals had to change the careers on contracting RSI. One should carefully observe the actions of staff performing all sorts of activities and find out better ways doing the same for preventing RSI. If timely attention is given and preventive measures are undertaken, Library staff can not only avoid RSI, but also improve their work processes, efficiency and general well being. Training & Education to avoid RSI should be imparted to the Library Staff there by helping them in doing their job better.

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