

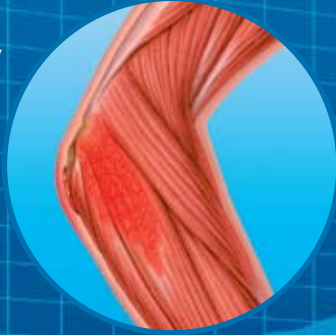
# Understanding Repetitive Strain Injuries

## Tennis Elbow

Caused by repeated use of the forearm (i.e. playing tennis or golf, painting, carpentry)

### Symptoms

- Pain occurs on the outside of the elbow
- Pain worsens with strong gripping and elbow extension
- Lifting and carrying tend to be difficult

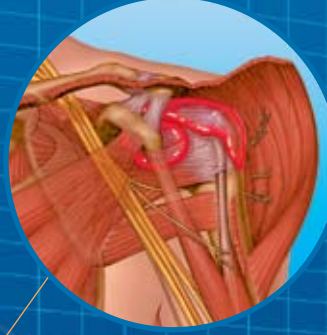


## Rotator Cuff Syndrome

Caused by repetitive strenuous shoulder activities (i.e. throwing, tennis, swimming, or overhead painting)

### Symptoms

- Shoulder pain (often worse at night)
- Stiffness
- Weakness
- Loss of motion
- Increased pain when arm is lifted over head

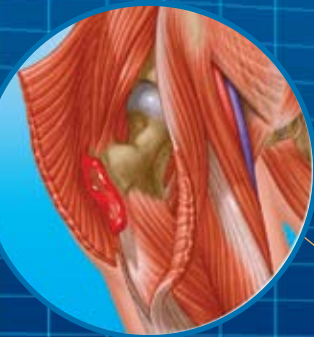


## Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Caused by repeatedly holding your wrists or hands in one position or in a non-neutral posture causing strain (i.e. computer work, or repeated use of vibrating hand tools)

### Symptoms

- Wrist pain
- Numbness or tingling in the fingers
- Difficulty making a fist
- A weaker than normal hand grip



## Hip Bursitis

Caused by inflexibility and poor muscle conditioning of the hip and leg muscles. Very often found in runners.

### Symptoms

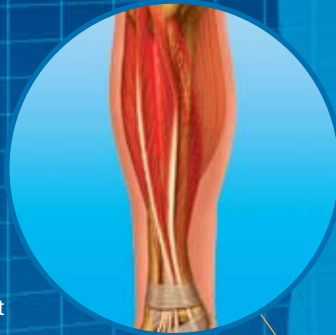
- Stiffness in the hip joint and pain on the outside of the hip that can travel down the outside of the thigh
- Increased pain with running, walking, prolonged sitting or lying on the affected side

## Shin Splints

An injury often found in runners/athletes due to poor muscle conditioning, improper footwear or constantly running on hard surfaces

### Symptoms

- Dull, diffused ache over the front of the shin or lower leg
- Often tender lumps can be found along either side of the shin bone



## Patellofemoral Syndrome

Caused by excessive use and or repetitive bending of the knee (i.e. running, jumping, cycling)

### Symptoms

- Pain and cracking under kneecap
- Knee pain when walking, running or sitting for long periods of time
- Pain worsens when walking down stairs
- Trouble kneeling or squatting



## Remember:

**R** – rest

**I** – ice

**C** – compression

**E** – elevation

**Advil**<sup>®</sup>

For today's tough pain<sup>™</sup>

# Caring for Repetitive Strain Injuries

## What are Repetitive Strain Injuries?

Repetitive strain injuries (RSIs), also commonly referred to as cumulative trauma disorders, are soft tissue injuries that can affect any of the muscles, joints, nerves, tendons or ligaments in the body. RSIs cause persistent or recurring pain and affect mostly the neck, shoulders, hands, wrists, elbows and lower limbs.

## What causes RSIs?

RSIs develop slowly and are often caused by repeated movement, excessive force or strain on the musculoskeletal system or by maintaining an unnatural or restricted posture for long periods of time. While RSIs are most common within the workplace (computer use, repeated tasks, heavy loading and unloading) they can also be caused by engaging in specific sporting activities that continually stress the same tendons, ligaments and muscle groups (i.e., tennis, golf, baseball, and running).

## What are the Symptoms of RSIs?

In general, some of the most common symptoms of RSIs are:

- Pain, stiffness, swelling, numbness or tingling in the hands, wrists, elbows, shoulders, back or neck
- Inability to firmly grasp objects
- Discomfort which is brought on by carrying out a particular task, and then improves when no longer doing it (i.e., the pain lessens or disappears during periods of rest)
- Aches and pains which are often strongest at night

**Early diagnosis and treatment of RSIs is important. If you suspect that you might have a repetitive strain injury, see your physician as soon as possible.**

## Prevention

Below are some basic tips on how to minimize your risk of developing repetitive strain injuries.

### At Work:

- Work and workstations must be adapted to meet the needs of the worker – the environment must fit the person rather than the person fitting the job
- Take frequent breaks – get up from your desk/chair and walk around
- Stretch frequently – stretching improves range of motion and increases flexibility
- Maintain proper posture for the task at hand
- Alternate tasks so that the repetitive motion is spread over multiple tasks
- Understand and be aware of the symptoms for the RSIs associated with a particular job/task

### At Play:

- Make sure you warm up and cool down your muscles before and after exercising
- Increase flexibility by stretching before and after exercising
- Understand and maintain good posture for the particular sport/activity
- Ensure that proper sporting equipment (appropriate footwear, clothing, padding, etc.) is being used at all times
- Take frequent rest breaks
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration when exercising
- Avoid exhaustion – cease activity if overtired
- Do not exercise when in pain

## Treatment

### Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation (RICE)

The RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation) method of treatment can often be used to help reduce the pain, swelling and discomfort associated with common RSIs.

#### R-Rest

If possible, rest the affected area and avoid activities that aggravate the condition.

- Do not avoid using the affected area entirely since inactivity can cause the joint/limb to stiffen

#### I-Ice

Ice causes blood vessels to constrict, helping to keep blood and fluid from building up in the injured area.

- Apply ice (wrapped in a wet towel or cloth) for 15 minutes 2-3 times per day

#### C-Compression

Compression of the injured area (using an elastic bandage, sling or brace) helps to immobilize and protect the joint and also reduces swelling.

- The wrap should be snug without cutting off circulation

#### E-Elevation

Raising the injured area enables excess fluid to drain which helps to reduce swelling.

- Place a pillow under the injured area and, if possible, elevate it above the heart while still maintaining a comfortable position

#### Ice vs. Heat

In general, ice should be used first. Once the swelling is gone heat may be applied to increase blood flow to the affected area which helps promote healing. However, applying heat too soon can increase swelling. Ice constricts blood flow, which reduces swelling and inflammation. It also numbs the affected area to reduce pain, and muscle spasms.

Heat increases circulation, relaxes muscle tension, reduces joint stiffness, and prepares tissues for rehabilitation.