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I wish I had a dollar for every time someone said, "I won't get RSI. I don't type much."

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is defined as a cumulative trauma disorder stemming from prolonged repetitive, forceful, or awkward hand movements. The result is damage to muscles, tendons, and nerves of the neck, shoulder, forearm, and hand, which can cause pain, weakness, numbness, or impairment of motor control.

RSI's are very common in Australia today. Fine hand movements, repeated hour after hour, day after day, eventually strain the muscles and tendons of the forearms, wrists, and fingers, causing microscopic tears. This causes the muscle tendons to become inflamed, and begin to pinch neighboring nerves. This can result in numbness, tingling, or hypersensitivity to touch. Unless this cycle is interrupted, it repeats itself over and over, and a long-term, chronic problem results.

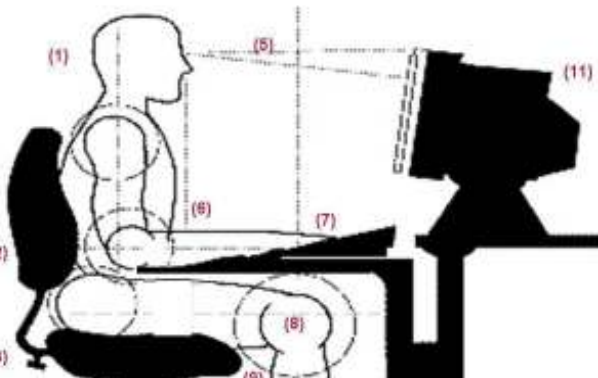
***If you type 40 words a minute: you press 12,000 keys per hour or 96,000 keys per 8-hour day.
Approximately 8 ounces of force is necessary to depress one key.
Almost 16 tons of force will be exercised by your fingers.***

A total of 1,065 occupational overuse syndrome claims were reported in NSW in 2007/08, representing 12 per cent of all occupational diseases. The total gross incurred cost for these claims was \$24.4 million with an average cost of \$22,927 per claim. Total lost time at work was an average of 13 weeks per claim. Occupational overuse syndrome claims made up a total of 2.5% of all claims in NSW.

Prevention of Computer Overload Injuries: Workstation Ergonomics

To understand the best way to set up a computer workstation, it is helpful to understand the concept of neutral body positioning. This is a comfortable working posture in which your joints are naturally aligned. Working with the body in a neutral position reduces stress and strain on the muscles, tendons, and skeletal system and reduces your risk of developing a musculoskeletal disorder. The following are important points to consider while working at the computer workstation:

1. **Head** is level, forward facing, and balanced. Generally it is in-line with the **trunk**.
2. **Back** is fully supported with appropriate lumbar support when sitting vertical or leaning back slightly.
3. **Thighs** and **hips** are supported by a well-padded



- seat and parallel to the floor.
4. Adjustable height of seat allows proper angle for legs
 5. **Viewing distance:** 350 – 750 mm.(normally one arms length away)
 6. **Shoulders** are relaxed and **upper arms** hang normally at the side of the body. **Elbows** stay in close to the body and **forearms** level with height of desk or are bent between 90 and 100 degrees.
 7. **Hands, wrists, and forearms** are straight, and roughly parallel to the floor.
 8. **Knees** are about the same height as the hips (90 angle) with the **feet** slightly forward.
 9. Back of knee and thigh are free from the back of the seat.
 10. **Feet** are fully supported by the floor or a footrest may be used to achieve this.
 11. **Eye** level with top of screen.

Most Common Types of RSI Injuries

Wrist and/or Hand pain

- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: This is a painful disorder of the hand caused by pressure on the main nerve that runs through the wrist. Pain is located at the heel of the hand and may refer to the index, middle and ring fingers. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is the most common nerve compression disorder of the upper extremity. This process affects 5 percent of the working population who must undergo repetitive use of their hands and wrists in daily living.
- DeQuervain's Tendinopathy (thumb pain): This is common condition of inflammation around the tendons that control the thumb. Pain is located at the thumb side of the wrist.

Elbow and/or Forearm pain

- Lateral Epicondylagia (Tennis Elbow – outside of the elbow): A common cause of elbow pain most often from repetitive stress. Pain is felt outside of the elbow and top of the forearm and/or sometimes wrist.
- Medial Epicondylagia (Golfer's Elbow – inside of the elbow): A common cause of pain most often from repetitive stress. Pain is felt inside of the elbow and top of the forearm and/or sometimes inside surface of wrist
- Ulnar Neuropathy at the Elbow: This is an inflammation or compression of the ulnar nerve. Pain is felt inside of the elbow and inner side of the arm and hand near the little finger.

Neck and Shoulder and/or Arm Pain

- Neck Tension Syndrome: This is neck pain as a result of muscular fatigue secondary to overuse. Pain is felt at the base of the neck and between the shoulders and often radiated into the upper arm.
- Cervical Radiculopathy (pinched nerve): Injury to the vertebrae or disks in the neck causing a pressure on the nerve roots exiting close to the spine. Discomfort is felt on one side of the neck, radiating to the arm, hand, and sometimes fingers.

Shoulder and Arm Pain

- Thoracic Outlet Syndrome: This is a compression injury to the nerves or blood vessel bundles from narrow passageways at the base of the neck passing under your collarbone and into your arm. Pain is felt in the shoulder and arm.

Lower back Pain

- Low back pain (general): Low Back pain is a sudden or gradual onset of pain in the low back. The nature of the condition can be quite complex as many structures

around the lower spine can contribute to the discomfort. Pain is felt mostly between the bottom of the ribs and the top of the pelvis.

10 Tips to Improve your health & Reduce Incidence of RSI at Work

- Be aware of your [Posture](#) – avoid slouching and C shape sitting
- If you feel the need to move – then move by getting out of your chair to stretch!
- Do regular [Posture Pause or Decompression exercises](#) 4-6 x per day
- Use your chair to support your spine by sitting as far back as possible and using the lumbar support
- Remember the 20/20/20 rule - save your eyes by looking away 20 metres from your monitor every 20 minutes, for 20 seconds
- Remember to blink!
- Have an annual eye examination as statistics show that your eyes deteriorate with excessive amount of computer work
- Drink lots of water – minimum of 1-1.5L p/day, it's vital to hydrate your system and this will also force you to get up regularly
- Don't take your lunch at the desk - get out of the office for 20-30 minutes, this way you're getting some aerobic exercise as well as VIT D which is essential for your health and well-being
- Remember to breathe – it's amazing how one's respiratory rate drops when working on computer

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