

REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES

Computers are as common in the workplace as telephones. We use them for everything: creating letters and forms, writing reports, editing, electronic mail and surfing the Net. Computers require our hands and arms to be used more than ever. Repeating the same motion over and over again at high speeds with little rest, and applying force to muscles, joints, or tendons while in an awkward angle may be putting more stress on those body parts than is necessary and can increase the chance of developing repetitive motion injuries (RMIs).

An ergonomically designed, adjustable workstation is one of the most effective ways to decrease the possibility of developing RMIs. Here are some guidelines:

- Raise or lower your desk, chair or computer screen to get the top of your screen at or slightly below eye level. The screen should be easily viewed without straining your neck forward.
- Use a document holder to position papers at the same level as the screen.
- Your neck should be straight with your head centered above your spine. Have your arms bent roughly at 90-degree angles with your wrists and hands straight or in a neutral position.
- Your spine should have its normal curve supported with your feet resting in a relaxed position on the floor or on a footrest.
- Use wrist rests, telephone headsets, back supports and footrests to relieve strain on your arms, neck and lower back.
- Try to keep your hands, arms and shoulders loose and relaxed. It's important to do stretching exercises before and after long typing periods. Stretch your fingers, wrists, arms and shoulders frequently and vary your work activities so as not to repeat the same motions for long periods of time.
- Lighten your typing touch. The more force you use, either constantly or on impact, the more likely it is that you may strain a muscle or sprain a tendon.
- Rest or vary your tasks. Your body parts need rest each day. Your risk of injury increases if your body parts don't have time to repair and rest.

Let your Supervisor know if you need assistance in arranging your workstation and let your Supervisor know immediately if you are experiencing any pain or discomfort.

