

Training Module: Repetitive Motion

Objective: To be able to identify the potential for injury in tasks requiring repetitive motion.

Trainer's Note: Eliminating repetitive motion injuries requires adapting work activities. Alert workers to the warning signs of potential problems. Discuss how to avoid or correct problems.

Background

Repetitive motion injuries (also called cumulative trauma disorder or CTD) occur when some action, usually bending or twisting, is done over and over. Pain or other warning signs may develop slowly. The most common body parts that are affected by repetitive motion injuries are: fingers, hands, wrists, elbows, arms, shoulders, back and neck. Other areas may also be affected. If pain does occur in any of the above mentioned areas or others, don't ignore it. The pain will not go away, but instead will get worse, and the injury will become more severe.

Some movements that may lead to repetitive motion injuries include:

- Repetitive action of the hand or arm
- Bending at the wrist
- Grasping or pinching objects
- Frequently raising the arm and/or the shoulder
- Applying force with the hand or arm

Symptoms that may alert you of an injury include:

- Waking due to pain
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Swelling or tenderness
- Continuous aches
- Loss of strength
- Loss of joint movement
- Crackling
- Decreased coordination

Prevention means working and playing smart. Plan how to use or move work equipment so that the same motions are repeated over and over. Be aware of repetitive motion used on and off the job. Repetitive motion trauma is most likely to occur after applying pressure or doing the same motion over and over. Some examples are: Putting on and taking off milkers in dairy operations, picking and sorting fruit, and sweeping floors. If inflicted in spite of prevention, contact your primary care provider for an evaluation. Receiving an early evaluation and treatment is important.

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help reduce symptomatic inflammation and pain. Regular follow-up visits with your physician should be scheduled to monitor your progress. For more serious cases you may be referred to an occupational therapist.

In most cases the physician will remove a person from the situation that is causing the injury. Time away from the situation, followed by a gradual return to an improved work situation will be suggested by the physician. Strengthening hand and arm muscles with exercise may be another suggestion. An improved work situation could be accomplished by simply changing motions so the same motion isn't continuously repeated, or by including short rest breaks into your daily routine.

Consider these tips:

- Avoid repeating the same motion, the same way for long periods of time.
- Work in a comfortable position.
- Force can cause injury; to nerves, muscles and tendons.
- Get plenty of rest.

Review The Following Points

- Work smart before using tools and work equipment.
- Be aware of the repetitive motions included in your work.
- If pain or numbness occurs, seek medical attention.
- Change work habits to change the repetitive motion.

True or False Answer Key

1. T, 2. T, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T

Repetitive Motion Quiz

True or False

Name _____

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Tingling or numbness in the fingers, hand or arm is a sign of repetitive motion injuries. | T | F |
| 2. Preventing repetitive motion problems starts with learning to work and play smart. | T | F |
| 3. There is no need to worry about changing work habits to change a motion that is repeated over and over. | T | F |
| 4. Not having enough rest, limits recovery from the motions and pressure that can lead to problems. | T | F |
| 5. Repetitive motion injures are caused by the simple actions of bending or twisting the body. | T | F |