What is Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)?

The term repetitive strain injury (RSI) is used to describe a range of painful conditions stemming from repeatedly working the same muscles, tendons and soft tissues. This can include repeatedly reaching at an awkward angle, lifting, pulling or pushing, badly designed equipment, remaining in a certain position for hours or putting a lot of pressure on a certain movement. A lot of the time, it is caused from our work lives although it can also be related to leisure activities. RSI can persist a lot longer than a general strain.

Symptoms:
• Pain, aching or tenderness
• Tightness
• Dull ache
• Throbbing
• Stiffness
• Tingling and numbness
• Weakness
• Cramp

Why does it happen?
Certain activities are thought to increase the risk of RSI, including:
• Repetitive movements
• High-intensity activity for a long time without rest
• Poor posture or activities that lead you to look in an awkward position
• Stress, it’s important to work in a comfortable environment which has been appropriately adjusted. Your employer has a legal duty to try to prevent work-related RSI and ensure anyone who already has the condition doesn’t get any worse.

The symptoms tend to develop gradually. At first the symptoms may only occur whilst you are doing your repetitive activity and ease off when you are not doing it. After time, symptoms can eventually happen more...
frequently and could happen all the time. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

**What can you do to prevent it?**
By taking breaks regularly, this can allow time for your injury to repair itself and not just make it worse. Even though it’s not always practical, try to reduce the amount of consecutive time you spend on such activities. For example, if you work in an office and your main job is typing, you should be taking regular breaks and do other tasks which are not of the same nature. Make sure you keep your body moving to stop muscles from weakening.

If you are in an office environment,

why not invest in some ergonomic furniture, including chairs and desks.

**Self Help**

- If you work on a computer, make sure your seat, screen and mouse are all adjusted so that it doesn’t cause you any strain.
- Stretch the affected muscles and joints regularly, not just when you feel pain, a regular routine of stretching can improve flexibility and strengthen the muscles.
- Lifting weights strengthens your affected and supported muscles, e.g. squeezing a rubber ball strengthens your wrist and muscles in the forearm.
- Applying hot or cold packs to the affected area help ease pain. However, do not apply ice directly to the skin as this can damage it. Always wrap it in a towel before applying.

We recommend having a physiotherapy session to assess the primary cause and help with treating the problem.