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## Keep your musculoskeletal system healthy



Whether you're working or playing, doing the same thing every day requires good musculoskeletal health. Your musculoskeletal system includes the bones and muscles that help you move.<sup>1</sup> Doing the same motion day after day can be hard on your body, and can strain your musculoskeletal system.<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever felt numbness in your hand or a sharp pain in your arm or wrist? It could be an injury from repeating the same motion. Repetitive motion injuries (RMIs) usually affect the hands, wrists, elbows and shoulders.<sup>3</sup> Strain causes tiny tears in your muscles and tendons. When the tears can't heal as fast as they are being made, the area becomes inflamed and painful.<sup>4</sup>

### Keeping motion injuries at bay

You can prevent RMIs from happening and reduce symptoms. Here are a few tips for preventing and treating RMIs:

- Take frequent breaks. Stretch and give your body time to rest.
- Adjust your chair and desk so you're sitting in a natural position.
- Keep an upright posture. Avoid leaning forward or backward more than you have to.
- Use a splint to lessen pressure on the muscles and nerves.
- Put ice on the affected area.
- To relieve soreness and pain, try physical therapy.

### Staying pain free for the future

With rest, most people fully recover from RMIs.<sup>2</sup> By taking steps now to protect your bones and muscles, you can keep doing the things you need to do every day at work and at play.

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#### Sources

1 Cleveland Clinic website: Normal Structure and Function of the Musculoskeletal System (accessed December 2014): [clevelandclinic.org](http://clevelandclinic.org).

2 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke website: NINDS Repetitive Motion Information Page (accessed December 2014): [ninds.nih.gov/disorders/repetitive\\_motion/repetitive\\_motion](http://ninds.nih.gov/disorders/repetitive_motion/repetitive_motion).

3 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke website: Carpal Tunnel Syndrome Fact Sheet (accessed December 2014): [ninds.nih.gov/disorders/carpal\\_tunnel/detail\\_carpal\\_tunnel](http://ninds.nih.gov/disorders/carpal_tunnel/detail_carpal_tunnel).

4 WebMD: Fitness & Exercise Repetitive Motion Injuries (accessed December 2014): [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

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## Do these sound familiar?

The most common types of RMIs are tendonitis, bursitis and carpal tunnel syndrome.<sup>4</sup>

- o **Tendonitis** causes pain and swelling where the tendon enters the muscle. The skin over the painful area might be warm and red.
- o **Bursitis** is an inflammation of one of the fluid-filled sacs – bursae – that cushion areas of friction between your tendons and bones. You might have decreased range of motion in the joint that hurts, and you might feel like something is crunching when you move it.
- o **Carpal tunnel syndrome** is caused by irritation to the tendons in the wrist. Swelling around the irritated tissue compresses the nerves that run between the wrist and hand. In turn, this causes pain and numbness in the hand, wrist and arm.

In many cases, RMIs can be prevented with stretching exercises, frequent rest breaks and good posture.

### On-the-job tips

Sitting or standing in a certain position for a long time can be hard on your body. And any sort of job where you have to do the same motion over and over can cause stress to your bones and muscles. Having adjustable furniture at your workstation can help you be more comfortable. Try to keep your body in the most natural positions possible, so you don't have to lean forward or backward any more than necessary. Try to find more than one comfortable position for your chair, work surface and/or keyboard, so you can change positions instead of straining the same set of bones and muscles all day long.<sup>3</sup>

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