RSI Day, February 28, 2023

What is RSI Day?

Every year on the last day of February, the occupational health and safety community comes together to raise awareness of **R**epetitive **S**train **I**njuries, also called musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

RSIs are a family of injuries affecting tendons, tendon sheaths, muscles, nerves and joints. They cause persistent or recurring pains, most commonly in the neck, shoulders, forearms, hands, wrists, elbows, and lower limbs. The injuries can be caused by or in combination with force, rapid movement, overuse, static loading, excessive strain, uncomfortable positioning of limbs or holding one's posture in an unnatural, constrained or constricted position.

Why do we raise awareness about RSIs?

In Ontario, RSIs account for about 50% of all lost-time days and 40% of all lost-time claims approved by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Unfortunately, far too many RSIs are not recognized or reported as workplace injuries. Many workers are unfamiliar with RSIs, so everyday aches and pains are overlooked, and no connection is made between the injury and the workplace.

HEALTH AND SAFETY
FACT SHEET

Repetitive strain injuries

What are repetitive strain injuries?

Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) are a family of painful disorders affecting tendons, muscles, nerves and joints. They cause persistent or recurring pains most commonly in the neck, shoulders, forearms, hands, wrists and elbows.

RSIs have a variety of causes and include injuries to different parts of the body. RSIs are also known by other names, such as:

- Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders.
- Repetitive Motion Injuries.
- Cumulative Trauma Disorders.
- Occupational Cervicobrachial Disorders.
- Overuse Injury.
- Regional Musculoskeletal Disorders.
- Soft Tissue Disorders or Soft Tissue Injuries.

holding an unnatural posture for too long.

RSIs are an all too common cause of CUPE members' suffering. But it is hard to fully gauge the extent of the problem due to the under-reporting of RSIs.

Members who suffer from RSIs experience symptoms in joints, muscles, nerves and tendons, such as:

- Numbness and stiffness.
- Tingling and burning sensations.
- Pain and dull aches that can be strongest at night.
- Dry and shiny palm.
- Swelling around the affected area.
- Wasting of the muscles at the base of the thumb.
- Loss of dexterity in the affected area.

Pain in one area of the body may spread to other areas. For example, pain in the wrist can move to the forearm, shoulder

Aches and pains are an indication that a serious injury may be developing. If the causes of the injury are not eliminated, or the worker is not moved from the injuring job or task immediately, the damage can be permanent and irreversible. Sometimes the injury is crippling, leaving the worker in pain and possibly immobile for life.

Because repetitive strain injuries have numerous causes affecting a variety of areas, eliminating them demands a comprehensive prevention program. The cornerstone of such a program must be to make the job fit the person rather than make the person fit the job.

Under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers have a general duty to identify, assess, and control or eliminate exposure to all hazards, including those which can contribute to the development of RSIs and MSDs. Further, the employer must ensure that workers are trained on the hazards that may cause an injury. Workers' training could include instruction and information on how to carry out repetitive or physical tasks safely, the proper use of tools and equipment, manual lifting procedures, maintaining an ergonomically safe workstation, taking rest breaks, and early recognition of injury.

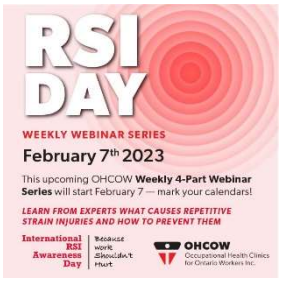
How can I participate in RSI Day?

Awareness

- Download, share and post the CUPE fact sheet on Repetitive Strain Injuries (English/French)
- Download, share and post these posters and infographics from CCOHS (English/French)
- Perform a basic self-assessment.
    - Download the Pain Point App to your mobile phone. The Pain Point app is a first-step assessment that will help you recognize the signs of injury and take action for prevention.

Attend a webinar

During the month of February, the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) is hosting a series of webinars related to RSIs and MSDs. All times session times are 10 am -12 pm (EST).



- **February 10, 2023**
    - Session 1 – ***Four E's Of Shoulder Injuries***
    - Session 2 – ***Concussion: Post-concussion Symptoms, Underreporting, and Prevention of Workplace Hazards***
- **February 14, 2023**
    - Session 1 – ***Implications of Indoor Environment Quality in an Office Setting***
    - Session 2 – ***Ergonomics and Sleep***
- **February 21, 2023**
    - Session 1 – ***Canadian Women's Experiences with Personal Protective Equipment in the Workplace***
    - Session 2 – ***Review of and New Directions for OHCOW's PDD Handbook***
- **February 28, 2023**
    - **Ergonomic Prevention Tools – Job Demands: Physical and Cognitive**

Register for this year's webinars and see past RSI Day webinars at:
https://www.ohcow.on.ca/events/repetitive-strain-injury-rsi-day/

Where can I learn more about RSIs?

Find out more about RSIs and MSDs from the following resources and websites

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

- Repetitive Strain Injuries – Facts Sheet (English/French)
- Hazard Prevention Program (English/French)
- Hazard vs Risk (English/French)

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS)

- International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day (English/French)

Centre for Research and Expertise – Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD)

- MSD Prevention Guideline for Ontario

Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)

- Workplace Ergonomics

Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC)

- Manual Material Lifting: a pain in the neck, back ...
- MSDs of the Upper Body: from recognition to resolution
- Patient Lifting: handle with care
- Prolonged Standing: taking the load off
- Sitting on the Job: static load, chronic pain