

OSSTF District 9 Health and Safety (519) 979-2587



The employer and the supervisor have duties under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to **"take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker"** 25(2)(h). 27(2)(c).

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Repetitive Strain Injuries

Across Canada, one in every 10 adults suffers from Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) or Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) which affect muscles, nerves and tendons. These injuries can alter your life forever, robbing you of your mobility and your dignity. Beyond the social, emotional and economic cost to the individual, taxpayers end up paying \$26 billion per year for health care expenses and income assistance.

Symptoms

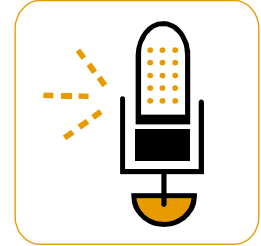
- Aches
- Pains
- Burning
- Tingling
- Swelling
- Loss of movement
- Loss of strength

Examples of RSIs

- Tendonitis
- Tenosynovitis
- Carpal tunnel

Possible Results

- Physiotherapy
- Surgery
- Chronic disorder



Causes to be avoided

- Repetition
- Forceful movements
- Cold temperatures
- Fast pace of work
- Vibration
- Insufficient breaks
- Awkward postures
- Fixed postures
- Stress

If you have experienced any of the symptoms listed, try to avoid some of the causes. Adjust your work station, your procedures and your schedule.

Advocating for Change

Don't accept the hazard - Eliminate it

There are 3 ways to deal with any hazard, At the Source, Along the Path and At the Worker. The best alternative is to eliminate the hazard at the source (changing the equipment or tasks) since dealing with the problem at the worker (providing wrist supports, back support belts) does not remove the hazard. If you are aware of a potential hazard, ask that it be eliminated before it causes a problem. The employer shall ensure that "the equipment, materials and protective devices provided by the employer are maintained in good condition" 25 (1)(b).

Ask for proper training

The employer is also required to "provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker" 25(2)(a). The supervisor shall "advise a worker of the existence of any potential or actual danger to the health or safety of the worker of which the supervisor is aware" 27 (2)(a).

Types of training to request:

- *How to evaluate your computer workstation and work procedures
- *Proper exercises for rest breaks
- *Proper lifting techniques - for manual materials or for lifting students (support staff)

Push for legislative changes

Effective February 1, 2007, a new health and safety regulation in Manitoba will spell out specific employer duties for addressing violence, harassment and the working conditions responsible for the development of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). They are joining many other provinces beginning to address these hazards. In Ontario, there is not specific regulatory protection addressing these issues despite the efforts of many. Everyone can voice the need for these regulations by writing to your local MPP. See the Ontario Federation of Labour website for more information. <http://www.ofl-fto.on.ca/>



According to ESAO, **42%** of lost-time injuries in 2005 in the education sector were due to musculoskeletal injuries.

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Education Safety
Association of Ontario

Reporting Accidents/Injuries/Illness

It is your responsibility as an employee to ensure all accidents and/or injuries are reported to your employer and your union. Please ensure you follow the following steps when you experience a work related accident/injury and/or illness.

1. Have your principal file an "Employee Incident/Injury Report" for ALL accidents, no matter how minor. Even a small paper cut, sliver or a bite from a student can become infected. Bruises and strains are injuries too. Allergic reactions and illnesses that can be correlated with workplaces exposures are also reportable. You are

entitled to time off work to go to the doctor/clinic if you need medical attention.

2. Get a copy of the Incident/Injury Report for yourself and keep copies of all documentation you receive from any medical practitioners. The employer only needs to know your limitations, not all of the medical information, which is reviewed by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

3. If your doctor writes a recommendation for an ergonomics assessment, and you are not already dealing with the WSIB, have your principal arrange it through the GECDsB's

Health and Safety Officer, Tim Lauzon. Request a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee be present.

4. If you miss any time from work or need any work accommodations due to work related causes, be sure to call or email Kathy Czaczkowski, GECDsB WSIB Officer and your bargaining unit's president immediately. Any time you email Kathy C. be sure to copy the email to your bargaining unit's president too. This will allow your bargaining unit to ensure you are receiving the appropriate support and/or compensation for your injury.

Reporting Hazards

If you are bringing any health and safety concerns to your supervisor please do so in writing so that a paper trail is created. If you discuss a relatively minor issue with them in passing, follow up with an email. If you ask about the status of a repair, do so in writing. You do not have to wait for the monthly health and safety inspection to have an item reported. Be sure to continue reporting health and safety concerns even if you are frustrated with how long it takes to have something repaired.

We have a legislated "duty" to report these items under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA),

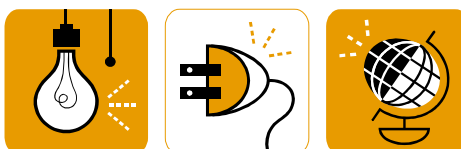
28. (1) A worker shall,
(a) work in compliance with the provisions of this Act and the regulations;
(b) use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn;
(c) report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger himself, herself or another worker; and
(d) report to his or her employer or supervisor any contravention of this Act or the regulations or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows.

Be sure to fulfil your duty to report. Section 50 of the OHSA also protects workers from reprisals (intimidation, coercion, threats, etc) when acting in compliance with the Act or when seeking enforcement of the Act.

If you have given your supervisor appropriate time to address the issue or if the supervisor does not agree that there is a hazard, contact your representative(s) on the Joint Health and Safety Committee. If you are in imminent danger, consider using your right to refuse unsafe work (Section 43).

Don't wait until you notice symptoms.

Prevention is key!



For More Information

Ministry of Labour (MOL)

The MOL website has a new emphasis on "Pains and Strains" including:

- *Computer Ergonomics: Workstation Layout and Lighting
 - *Rest Breaks for Computer Operators
- http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/ergonomics/is_ergonomics.html

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

The Prevent Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) webpage has information and fact sheets.

<http://www.wsib.on.ca/wsib/wsibsite.nsf/public/PreventMSD>

Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC)

The WHSC has several "Resource Lines" related to ergonomics and MSDs.

http://www.whsc.on.ca/pubs/res_lines.cfm

- *Lighting Hazards: What you don't see can hurt you
- *Manual Material Lifting: A pain in the back
- *Musculoskeletal Injuries (MSIs) of the Upper Body: Pervasive but preventable
- *Patient Lifting: Getting a handle on it
- *Prolonged Standing: Taking the load off
- *Sitting on the Job: Static load, chronic pain

Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers (OHCOW)

The OHCOW clinics have occupational health nurses, ergonomists, hygienists, and doctors on staff.

3129 Marentette Avenue, Unit #1
Windsor, Ontario N8X 4G1
(directly behind Devonshire Mall)
Phone (519) 973-4800 / 1-800-565-3185

Their website has numerous handouts.

<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/handouts.html>

- *Setting up the Computer Workstation to Fit You
- *Ergonomics and Driving
- *Ergonomics and Pregnancy
- *Exercises at your workstation
- *Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WRMD)
- *Working On Your Feet

And a 54 page Office Ergonomics Handbook

<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/workbooks/ergonomics.pdf>

Windsor Occupational Health Information Service (WOHIS)

Extensive health and safety library funded by United Way.

3129 Marentette Ave., Unit #2
Windsor, Ontario, N8X 4G1
(directly behind Devonshire Mall)
Phone (519) 254-5157

Workstation Exercise Breaks

from <http://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/handouts.html>

SHOULDER EXERCISES ex. Shoulder Roll: Roll the shoulders, raise them, pull them back, then drop them and relax. Repeat in the opposite direction.

NECK EXERCISES ex. Neck Side Bends: While sitting or standing, move your head to your right shoulder, trying to touch your shoulder with your ear (keep the shoulder down). Repeat on the left side.

ELBOW AND WRIST EXERCISES ex. Finger Stretch: Clench your hand into a fist with the palm facing you. Extend your fingers and hold and return to the fist position. Repeat with the other hand.

Downloads are also available on your computer to remind you to take stretch breaks.

The Ergociser

<http://www.ergocise.com/download.html>

Take Your Break

<http://www.usethank.com/download.html>

PRSI (Trial Version)

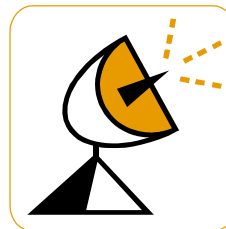
https://www.prevent-rsi.com/RSI/Web/Try_It/

The last day of
February each year is
designated as

**Repetitive Strain
Injury Awareness Day**

since it is the only
non-repetitive day
on the calendar.

NEXT ISSUE:
STRESS!



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