

Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI)

Repetitive Strain Injuries

Repetitive strain injuries (RSIs) are a collection of problems centered in the arm, wrist, and fingers. As muscles tighten they can become starved for oxygen and overladen with acidic waste products that are normally carried away by the bloodstream. It appears that some people are more prone to RSIs than others. The impact of the activity does not appear to play a major role in the disease—typists and diamond setters are just as likely to suffer as bricklayers and blacksmiths.

Prevention

Beyond a doubt, it is easier to prevent RSIs than to correct a problem once it appears. You don't need expensive equipment or exotic drugs, but something a bit more challenging—the discipline to quit working periodically and relax.

Think of your nerves like a garden hose. Hyperextending or hyperflexing your wrists puts a kink in the hose. Try to avoid these stressful postures. When you can't avoid them, take frequent short breaks to restore blood flow.

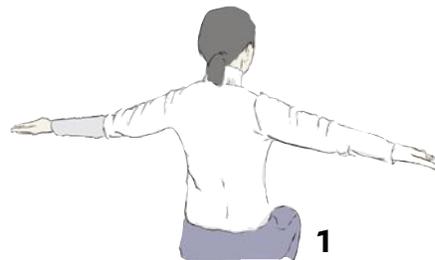
Prevention

In many instances, small adjustments can have meaningful benefits. Here are a few examples of simple modifications you can make yourself.

- wrap punches to make them fatter in the shank.
- wear bicycle gloves when hammering.
- use a padded bicycle handgrip on your sawframe and file handles.
- place rubber pads in front of buffing machines and other places where you stand for extended times.

RSI Exercises

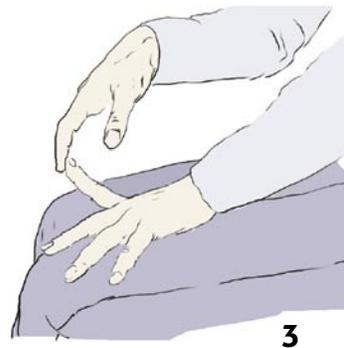
1 While sitting on the edge of a chair, straighten your spine, and hold your hands out to the side with your palms facing up. Imagine trying to grasp a ball between your shoulder blades.



2 Hold your hands at your sides and shake them gently and repeatedly for 30 seconds. Time it—it's longer than you might think.



3 While sitting down, put your palm on your knee. Lift and hold each finger for a count of 20; repeat for both hands.



4 While standing, reach your hand over your head and down your back to touch your spine. Set your other hand on the elbow of the first (which will be above your head) and gently push it back and down. Repeat for the other arm.



5 Put your hands on a table or desk and spread your fingers wide while you count to 10. Relax for a count of 10 and repeat.

