

## **Understanding Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs): Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment**

Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) are among the most common—and often overlooked—workplace and lifestyle injuries today. Whether you're typing at a desk, lifting weights, using hand tools, or even scrolling on your phone, repetitive motion can place stress on muscles, tendons, and nerves. Over time, this strain can lead to chronic discomfort or more serious dysfunction.

### **What Are Repetitive Strain Injuries?**

RSIs are soft-tissue injuries that occur from repeated motions, overuse, or maintaining awkward or fixed postures for long periods. They're not caused by a single traumatic event but build up gradually, often without clear warning signs until pain sets in.

Common RSIs include:

- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Tennis or golfer's elbow (epicondylitis)
- Tendonitis
- Trigger finger
- Rotator cuff injuries

### **How Do RSIs Happen?**

RSIs typically result from:

- Poor ergonomics – badly positioned keyboards, improper desk setups, or repetitive manual tasks.
- Lack of rest or recovery – insufficient breaks between repetitive motions.
- Excessive force – gripping, lifting, or pressing harder than necessary.
- Incorrect technique or posture – in sports, exercise, or work-related tasks.

Even small actions—like scrolling on your phone for hours or gripping a mouse too tightly—can contribute over time.

### **Signs and Symptoms**

Symptoms often develop slowly and can include:

- Persistent aches or soreness
- Tingling, numbness, or pins-and-needles sensations

- Muscle weakness or fatigue
- Stiffness or loss of range of motion
- Swelling or localised inflammation

Without early intervention, these symptoms can become chronic and harder to treat.

### **Best Ways to Treat Repetitive Strain Injuries**

The good news? RSIs can often be effectively treated—and prevented—with the right approach:

#### **1. Rest and Activity Modification**

Reducing or stopping the activity causing the strain is the first step. This doesn't always mean complete inactivity, but shifting to low-impact movements and giving the affected area time to recover is critical.

#### **2. Ergonomic Adjustments**

Whether you're at a desk or in a gym, ensure your posture and equipment are aligned properly. Ergonomic chairs, adjustable keyboards, standing desks, or proper lifting techniques can drastically reduce strain.

#### **3. Physical Therapy**

THERA-P can assess the cause of your RSI and develop a targeted plan to restore mobility, reduce pain, and strengthen weak areas. Techniques may include stretching, manual therapy, and strengthening exercises.

#### **4. Ice and Anti-Inflammatories**

Applying ice to inflamed areas and using NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) can help manage symptoms in the short term.

#### **5. Bracing or Support**

In some cases, braces, splints, or compression gear can support the affected area and limit aggravating movements during healing.

#### **6. Gradual Return to Activity**

Once pain subsides, it's important to reintroduce activities gradually, with an emphasis on form and control to avoid re-injury.

### **Prevention Is Key**

Long-term prevention of RSIs involves:

- Taking regular breaks (the 20-20-20 rule for screen use: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds)
- Staying active and mobile

- Warming up before repetitive tasks or workouts
- Building strength in supportive muscles
- Using proper technique in both work and exercise

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## Conclusion

Repetitive Strain Injuries may seem minor at first, but left untreated, they can interfere with daily life and long-term performance. Awareness, early intervention, and proactive treatment can make all the difference. If you're noticing persistent discomfort from repetitive tasks, don't ignore the warning signs—your body is asking for a reset.