

in particular are aimed towards recovery from intense physical exertion and repetitive motion. Its benefits include:

- Relaxation of tense and stiff muscles.
- Deactivation of tender or trigger points.
- Increased pliability of connective tissues.
- General relaxation for enhanced healing overall.

Regular massage helps reduce stress, which can be a contributing factor in the onset of repetitive stress injuries. Regular massage also helps maintain flexibility, which may also aid in injury prevention

Treatment

If prevention strategies are ignored or inadequate, accumulated stresses and strains can result in the chronic pain, loss of function, and/or inflammation associated with RSIs. Once diagnosis is made by a qualified health care practitioner, treatment for a specific RSIs may be planned. Massage is often a major part of or complement to the treatment plan. Massage therapists trained in a variety of anatomically specific techniques can design sessions to best address the diagnosed problem. Some of the more common approaches used to treat RSIs include:

- Classic Western (Swedish) massage for general relaxation and release of muscle tension
- Deep friction for various forms of tendinitis
- Myofascial massage for connective tissue pliability
- Neuromuscular techniques to relieve trigger points
- Stretching for muscle relaxation, elongation, and joint mobility

Massage has been shown to promote overall stress reduction, and to lessen chronic pain in many cases. Since pain and dysfunction in one part of the body affects the body as a whole, a full-body massage can address related areas of

tension, as well as the general stress from anxiety and worry. Massage is a natural way of addressing injury, and many people find they feel better and can function better when massage is a part of their wellness routine.

References:

Andrade, Carla-Krystin and Paul Clifford. (201401) Outcome-Based Massage (3rd ed).. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

HealthPrevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders in the Workplace on the OSHA website www.osha.gov

Lowe, Whitney. Access numerous published articles regarding injuries and massage on Lowe's website at www.omeri.com

This brochure is intended for information only. Contact your physician for diagnosis of medical conditions, and for advice on whether massage might be beneficial for you.

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Repetitive Strain Injuries

A natural approach



**THERAPEUTIC
MASSAGE**
For a Healthier Life

Therapeutic Massage for Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs)

Therapeutic massage has been found to be effective for the prevention and treatment of repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). One of the greatest causes of occupational health problems in the United States, RSI's may take the form of muscle spasms, strains, inflammation of joints and various soft tissues, loss of motion, and chronic pain.

RSIs are musculoskeletal injuries that result from the repetitive motion involved in many jobs, as well as leisure pursuits like golf, tennis, weaving, or playing a musical instrument. Other names for RSI's include cumulative trauma disorders (CTD), repetitive motion injuries, repetitive stress syndrome, occupational overuse syndrome, and overuse injuries.

Therapeutic massage can help relieve the pain caused by repetitive motion and so aid in the prevention of overuse injuries. Massage is also used in the treatment of RSIs such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, rotator cuff tendinitis, and other common soft tissue injuries.

Causes of RSIs

Activities that involve monotonous repetition of movement produce stress on the related muscles and joints. This often leads to overuse injuries. Factors that contribute to RSIs are repetitive tasks, forceful exertions, vibrations, mechanical compression, sustained/awkward positions, fast paced motion, repeated pressure on a particular joint, cold temperatures, and inadequate rest breaks. RSIs develop over time and are the result of cumulative stresses and strain.

Those vulnerable to RSI's include assembly line workers, machine operators, checkout scanners,

professional athletes and musicians. Our computers, phones, and other gadgets have produced an epidemic of carpal tunnel syndrome and "Smartphone thumb". Anyone who spends hours a day using technology is at risk for RSIs. Others such as barbers, hair stylists, gardeners, and massage therapists themselves are at risk for job related strains.

Symptoms & Types of RSIs

RSIs develop over time. Symptoms may start out mild and then progress to intensely painful and debilitating conditions. RSIs can develop over a short period of weeks or months, or take years to reach a serious condition. They can be irritating, painful and, if left unchecked, disabling.

Common symptoms of RSIs include aching, tenderness, swelling, tingling or numbness, weakness or loss of coordination, crackling in the joints, loss of flexibility, and muscle spasms. The symptoms may occur while performing the repetitive motion, or long afterwards. Eventually, the pain of RSIs can become chronic and constant.

Common types of repetitive injuries include tendinitis/tenosynovitis (inflammation of tendons or tendon sheaths), bursitis (inflammation of the fluid sacs around a joint), ganglion cysts (lumps that form under the skin over tendons), nerve impingement, carpal tunnel syndrome, Achilles tendinitis in the lower leg, tennis and golfer's elbow, thoracic outlet syndrome in the shoulder, and flexor tenosynovitis or trigger finger.

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Prevention of RSIs

Two strategies are commonly used to help minimize the potential for repetitive stress injuries. These are reducing stress to the body with ergonomics, and helping the body to recover so that it does not accumulate stress to the point of injury.

Ergonomics is an applied science focused on workstation and equipment design to minimize stress on the body. Good ergonomic design for chairs, desks, computer set-ups, telephone and other office equipment is as essential as well designed machinery in the shop, loading dock, and construction site to reduce RSIs. Even sports equipment and household tools are now designed with ergonomics in mind, and materials have been developed to absorb the shock to the body and reduce stress on muscles and joints.

Another key strategy to preventing RSIs is giving the body adequate time to recover from the negative effects of repetitive motion. This means taking breaks from the activity, and perhaps varying the tasks performed so that a particular part of the body has time to rest.

Self-Care

Recovery can be enhanced with self-massage and stretching of the muscles used most. Simple effective self-massage techniques can be performed to relieve areas of muscle tension and stiffness. Rubbing, kneading, friction, and direct pressure can be self-applied to many places on the arms, legs, lower back, neck, and shoulders to enhance circulation and relax muscles. Electrical devices such as vibrators and other massage machines offer additional relief, as do forms of thermal therapy like soaking in warm baths, or applications of ice to a stressed muscle.

Massage for Recovery

Regular therapeutic massage is perhaps one of the best methods of recovery for physically demanding jobs and leisure activities. Sports massage techniques