

What is Repetitive Motion Syndrome?

The term "repetitive motion syndrome" (RMS) refers to a small group of injuries to the soft tissues as a result of "repetitive motion" (performing the same motion over and over again.)

Over time, if the affected limb is not allowed proper rest, temporary or permanent damage can result to the cartilage, tendons, ligaments, nerves or muscles.

Although any part of the body is susceptible to these injuries, also referred to as repetitive stress injuries or RSI—the arms and wrists are most susceptible.

Repetitive injuries may be quite painful and debilitating.

Symptoms can include tingling, numbness, pain, stiffness and weakness.

RMS has the potential of becoming progressively worse over time and in some cases has resulted in complete loss of function of the affected body part.

Early and proper medical treatment are important in restoring the injured area completely.

What injuries are the most common repetitive injuries? Bursitis, Tendinitis and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome are the most commonly seen injuries in this category.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

The risk of developing CTS seems to be associated with a number of factors. Genetic predisposition, medical, social, vocational, avocational, and demographic factors may all be contributory. A combination of some or all of these factors may be present, eventually leading to the development of CTS. Definitive causative factors are far from clear. High risk groups are: whites, females, middle age, overweight, (especially recent weight gain), square shaped wrist, short stature, family history of CTS, pregnancy, and medical conditions such as diabetes and thyroid disorders. Although often thought to be caused by overuse, there exists much debate by physicians as to the actual cause of the syndrome.

Mild to moderate CTS (as diagnosed by the EMG) is often effectively treated with rest, physical therapy, night splinting, and oral anti-inflammatories and diuretics. Surgical intervention is required only if conservative measures fail, or if they fall into the "severe" category per the EMG.

DeQuervains syndrome is a painful inflammation of the tendons on the thumb side of the wrist. Once called "Washer Woman's Sprain", it produces pain with pressure over the area or moving the wrist in certain positions.

Bursitis is an inflammation of the bursa, small sacs that are found around joints, lubricating and cushioning the area between tendon and bone.

Tendonitis is an inflammation of a tendon, the tough sinew that attaches muscle to bone.

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome occurs when the median nerve is entrapped within the carpal tunnel. Entrapment occurs through a variety of causes. Of all the Repetitive Motions Injuries, CTS is the most controversial, even among the medical community.

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics: Repetitive motion resulted in the longest absences from work among the leading events and exposures in 2003—a median of 23 days.



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