



Towards Pain Prevention

... RSI Awareness Day and Every Day

Why prevention?

Occupational injuries to muscles, nerves and tendons may not be life-ending, but they can certainly be life-altering. They can change everything. They can rob workers of their mobility and their dignity. Workers are often left unable to care for themselves or those they love.

This is the hard reality for many. Year after year work-related repetitive strain injuries (RSIs), also commonly known as musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), account for more than 40 per cent of lost-time injuries (LTIs) allowed by Ontario's Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) — the single largest class of compensation claims. Many more though are never reported or denied. These injuries are suffered by workers in all sectors.

According to Statistics Canada, 2.3 million Canadian adults annually experience a MSD serious enough to limit their normal activities; and the majority of these injuries are caused by work-related activity. Beyond the social, emotional and economic costs to affected individuals are the economic costs to us all, which add up to \$26 billion dollars annually. Much of this paid, not by employers who operate unsafe workplaces, but by Canadian taxpayers through the health care system and income assistance to workers with these injuries and their families. These statistics and the painful experiences behind them demand solutions.

Why RSI Awareness Day?

The suffering experienced by those with MSDs is real and can impact every aspect of their lives. International RSI Awareness Day, held annually the last day of February, helps provide focus for creating awareness and prompting preventive action — both in the workplace and through regulatory interventions.

What exactly are RSIs or MSDs?

These are umbrella terms used to describe a collection of injuries that affect the muscles, nerves and tendons. Tendonitis, tenosynovitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and back strain are some common examples. Common symptoms include aches, pain, burning, tingling, swelling and loss of joint movement and strength in the affected area(s). These symptoms can progress into chronic and crippling disorders which often no amount of physiotherapy or surgery can put right.

What causes RSIs or MSDs?

A variety of factors can play a role in their development including:

- repetition
- forceful movements
- pace of work
- awkward or fixed postures
- vibration
- insufficient recovery time
- cold temperatures
- contact stress
- psychosocial stress.

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TRAINING ► THE RIGHT THING. THE RIGHT WAY.



What can be done?

The majority of RSIs or MSDs are preventable. Critical actions include:

- Organization and/or participation in RSI Day events
- Effective and enforced regulations by government
- Early reporting of symptoms and hazards to supervisor/employer (should also inform joint health and safety committee (JHSC) members or health and safety rep)
- Suggestions to improve working conditions to supervisor/employer (best done through JHSC members or health and safety rep)
- Implementation of ergonomic prevention solutions
- Worker involvement in suggestions and implementation
- Timely reporting to the WSIB of work-related MSDs
- Quality training to address these issues and more.

What can the Workers Centre do for you?

We offer a variety of resources aimed at equipping all workplace parties in all sectors of the economy with the knowledge and skills needed to lead ergonomic prevention efforts in their workplace. Resources include:

- Hazard bulletins on a variety of RSIs or MSDs, causes and solutions
- Case studies making the case for MSD prevention
- Literature review on the economics of ergonomics
- News items including related legislative interventions
- Information on, and support for, RSI Awareness Day and events
- Ergonomic training programs ranging from three to 30 hours and including the following:
 - ✓ Ergonomics and Musculoskeletal Disorders
 - ✓ Ergonomic Toolbox
 - ✓ Ergonomics: Applying Prevention Principles at Work
 - ✓ Ergonomics: Basic Information for Joint Committees
 - ✓ Ergonomics: Basic Principles
 - ✓ Ergonomics in Health Care and Social Services
 - ✓ Hand Tools
 - ✓ Manual Material Handling
 - ✓ Office Layout and Design
 - ✓ Patient Handling
 - ✓ Work Design

What about RSI Awareness Day 2021?

The Day will be recognized with a range of events in communities on every continent around the globe. Here in Ontario, the WHSC will support workplace and community events in many different ways including sharing of the extensive resources mentioned above.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, these and other events will be held virtually as will an important WHSC training offering.

WHSC believes effective workplace prevention starts with quality training to recognize the many work factors that contribute to MSDs. With this in mind we are offering the new *Ergonomics and MSDs* program in our virtual classroom on Friday, February 26, 2021. This program is offered for a nominal \$20 registration fee.

Register today to secure your spot in either the morning or afternoon session.



To learn more

visit www.whsc.on.ca or call toll free from anywhere in Ontario **1.888.869.7950**.