

Work Shouldn't Hurt

... 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 rob workers of their mobility and cause chronic pain so disabling they 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 approximately one-third of lost-time injuries (LTIs) allowed by Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) – the single largest class of compensation claims. Beyond the MSDs reported to the WSIB, a significant body of research evidence and the experiences of workers suggest many more MSDs are never reported to or recognized by the WSIB.

Beyond the social, emotional and economic costs suffered by affected individuals and their loved ones are significant economic costs to all Canadians. In fact, research evidence suggests these costs are likely between \$40 and \$67 billion dollars annually (US dollars). Much of this paid, not by employers who operate unsafe workplaces, but by Canadian taxpayers through the health care and income support systems. These statistics, the economic costs and the painful experiences behind them demand greater attention and preventive action as work shouldn't hurt.

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?

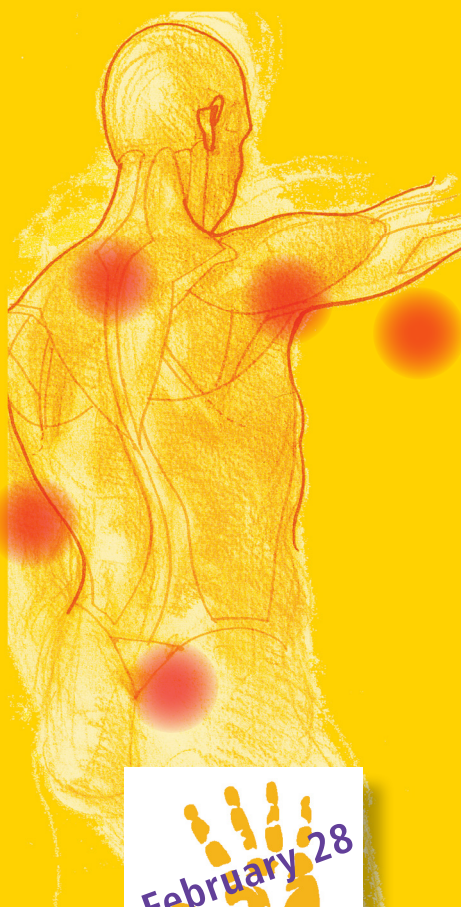
These are umbrella terms used to describe a collection of injuries that affect the muscles, nerves and tendons. Tendonitis, tenosynovitis, carpal tunnel syndrome and back strain are some common examples. Common symptoms include aches, pain, burning, tingling, swelling and loss of joint movement and strength 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 the development of RSIs or MSDs including:

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

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What can be done?

Fortunately, most work design and work demand hazards that give rise to RSIs or MSDs can be identified and eliminated with ergonomic interventions. These interventions involve designing work and work processes to meet the physical and mental needs of workers. Critical actions to this end can include:

- Organization and/or participation in RSI Day events
- Lobbying government for effective ergonomics regulation, including mandatory training standards to help prevent RSIs or MSDs
- Lobbying government to enforce existing regulations to protect workers
- Participating in quality training to prepare workplace parties to act on their right and duty to participate in pursuit of safer, healthier work
- Suggesting measures to improve working conditions to supervisor/employer (best done through joint health and safety committee (JHSC) members or health and safety rep)
- Implementation of ergonomic prevention solutions
- Worker involvement in identifying hazards and implementing prevention solutions
- Early reporting of symptoms and hazards to supervisor/employer (should also inform JHSC members or health and safety rep)
- Timely reporting to the WSIB of work-related MSDs

What can the Workers Centre do for you?

We offer a variety of resources aimed at equipping workers, worker representatives, supervisors/employers along with others seeking to learn more about RSIs and MSDs with the knowledge and skills needed to lead prevention efforts. Resources include:

- Hazard bulletins on a variety of RSIs or MSDs including prevention 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 2023?

In-person and virtual events will be held in communities across Ontario and around the world. For our part, WHSC believes effective workplace prevention starts with quality training to recognize the many work design and work demand hazards that contribute to RSIs/MSDs. So, to support RSI Awareness Day and workplaces seeking to raise the bar in their efforts to eliminate the hazards responsible for the development of RSIs/MSDs we are offering ergonomics training for a nominal \$20 fee. Visit our web site and see which program, delivery mode and date best fit your needs. Don't delay registering as space is limited for each program offered.

To learn more visit <https://www.whsc.on.ca/Events/RSI-Day> or contact a WHSC training service representative nearest you.

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