

# Repetitive Motion Disorders

If you use the same hand or arm movements over and over in your work, you could be at risk for developing a repetitive motion disorder (RMD). RMDs affect people in a variety of occupations, including office workers who use computers or typewriters for prolonged periods. Sometimes it takes months or years before symptoms of pain, fatigue or tingling appear in hands or arms. If left untreated, some types of RMDs can cause permanent injury. Fortunately, RMDs can often be prevented. If you learn now how to work smart and take care of your hands, you can reduce the risk of developing repetitive motion problems.

## SYMPTOMS

If your wrists ache, your fingers feel numb at night or you have difficulty performing simple manual tasks, you may be suffering from an RMD. These injuries result when the tendons and nerves in the hand or arm become inflamed and swollen from excess strain. In more serious disorders, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, swollen tendons may press on the main nerve of the hand, causing numbness and pain that can extend into the arm.

If you experience wrist or hand pain at work, or at home after work, tell your supervisor and seek medical attention. The earlier you identify and treat a repetitive motion problem, the more likely you will be able to prevent it from becoming a serious disability.

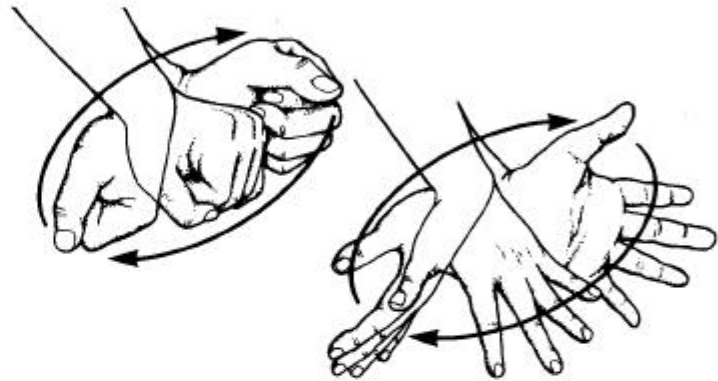
## MAKE YOUR JOB FIT YOU

Ergonomics, the science of designing workplaces so they fit the person, can help reduce the stress of the repetitive motions you perform at your job. Try adjusting your office furniture so that you can keep your wrists straight while typing. (Typing with your wrists and elbows lower than your fingers is very stressful for the tendons and can put pressure on the main nerve in your hand.) Position your chair high enough so that your elbows are even with, or slightly higher than, your keyboard while you type.

Take a short break and shake out your hands once during every hour you are at the keyboard. Pace yourself—although typing at breakneck speed may get the job done faster in the short run, a repetitive motion injury could put you out of commission for weeks or longer.

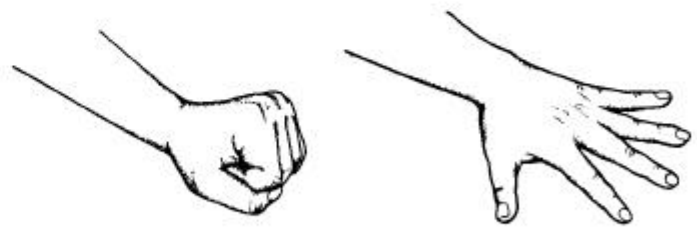
## CONDITIONING EXERCISES

Hand exercises play an important part in preventing RMDs. Do the following two exercises daily to strengthen wrist and hand muscles and relieve the strain of performing repetitive motions.



### Wrist Rotation

Make a fist and circle your entire hand (from the wrist) in one direction, gently. Repeat 15 times. Switch directions, and repeat 15 times. Then, release your fists, and with fingers extended, perform the same rotations.



### Hand Stretch

Make a fist, then extend your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for about 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat the entire sequence 5-10 times until hands and fingers feel relaxed and energized.

