

THE STRAINS OF EVERYDAY LIFE

With more than 70 percent of the United States work force sitting in front of computers during their work day, it's no wonder that the number of workplace strain has dramatically increased. Incorrect posture, awkward positioning, and repetitive motion cause the most common forms of musculoskeletal strains and injuries including carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and bursitis. Numbness, tingling, swelling, or pain in any area may indicate that something at your work station needs to change.

The Rehabilitation Staff of the Farmington Valley VNA suggest the following recommendations for those who work at computers on a daily basis:

- ✓ When working at the computer, correct posture includes positioning hips, knees and elbows at a 90 degree angle, with your feet flat on the floor, shoulders relaxed, and back against the back of the chair.
- ✓ Position your telephone within reach of your non-dominant hand. If you are right-handed, answer the phone with your left, which will free up your dominant hand to write with.
- ✓ Do not elevate your keyboard.
- ✓ Make modifications as needed. If your right wrist hurts, temporarily train yourself to maneuver the mouse with your left hand.

Those in mechanical and manufacturing trades run the risk of injuries from the effects of repeated vibrations and heavy lifting. In addition to always wearing steel-toed shoes, standing on industry-specified rubber mats, wearing anti-vibration gloves, and using assistive devices for lifting heavy objects will greatly reduce the chances of repetitive motion injuries.

Office staff and those in trade professions are not the only ones at risk. As a parent, think about how many times you reach into the back seat to hand something to your child. Even the constant lifting of your infant or child, coupled with the way you hold them, could cause strain on your body. The use of power equipment including lawn mowers, leaf blowers, or snow blowers may subject your body to repetitive motion or excessive vibration.

Adults are not the only population subject to repetitive motion injuries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that more than 2.6 million American children and adolescents seek emergency treatment for sports-related injuries each year. Stress fractures and tendonitis may be caused by overuse of muscles and tendons during sports games and practices, but may not always be diagnosed properly by x-ray. To complicate matters, active youth often have difficulty allowing an injury to heal with the use of rest, ice, compression, and elevation.

- ✓ Be certain that a member of your child's coaching staff is trained in first aid and CPR, and that a plan for responding to emergencies is in place.
- ✓ Outfit your child in properly fitted sports gear.
- ✓ Ensure that warm-up and cool-down exercises are part of your child's game and practice regimen.

In this busy world, it's difficult to realize how much unnecessary strain we put on our bodies. With a few preventative measures, our work and sports environment can be a safer, more productive place.