

Your massage therapist

Your massage therapist will be equipped to use several massage and stretching techniques to treat your particular problem, and may also incorporate hot or cold applications. Massage for injury treatment is an advanced skill. Your therapist will be happy to answer your questions about the chosen approach, training, and experience in working with injuries and chronic pain.

What else can you do?

Your massage therapist may recommend additional support strategies or refer you to a physician, physical therapist, occupational therapist or other health professional for more in-depth help.

You will probably be given specific exercises and stretches which, along with massage, may be the most helpful thing you can do. Ice applications for sore, strained muscles and tendons may also be suggested.

You may be advised to review your work station to ensure that the positioning of your equipment suits your physical needs. Experiment with ergonomic tools that may help, such as forearm, wrist and elbow supports or a new chair.

See if you can perform your work differently to avoid reinjury. Try to work in a more relaxed way and to develop an awareness of when tension is building so that you can take a break to breathe, shake out your arms and stretch.

Massage — your ally in recovery

Repetitive strain injuries can be painful, distressing, and even frightening, especially when they threaten the use of our bodies for work and everyday activities. Because of its remarkable ability to relieve tension, increase circulation, and reduce pain and swelling, therapeutic massage can be a powerful ally in healing your injury and returning you to a life of pain-free and enjoyable movement.

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Special thanks to Ronald J. Caselnova, LMT.

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Repetitive Strain Injuries



***Therapeutic Massage
for Pain Relief and
Faster Recovery***

RSI

The rise of computer use is calling attention to an increasing occurrence of repetitive strain injuries or RSIs. Often attributed to long hours of desk work, RSIs can develop from repeated movements during any activity at work or leisure, resulting in pain, loss of work, and decreased enjoyment of everyday life. Therapeutic massage is proving to be an effective tool for prevention and recovery from repetitive strain injuries.

What is repetitive strain injury?

Repetitive strain injuries, also known as cumulative trauma or overuse injuries, are injuries that most often occur in the soft tissues of the hand, wrist, forearm, shoulders and neck. Soft tissues include muscles, tendons and ligaments. Tendinitis (inflammation of a tendon), carpal tunnel syndrome, plantar fasciitis (inflammation of the sole of the foot) and tennis/golfer's elbow are common types of RSIs.

Repetitive strain injuries develop from frequently repeated actions. They can be brought about by short and quick movements, or positions held constantly over time. The latter can include gripping a computer mouse or a hammer, or sitting at a desk for long hours in an unsupported forward-head posture. People who operate computers, stand for prolonged periods of time, or use fine motor skills such as musicians, craft workers or assembly-line workers are at risk for RSIs. The repeated movements cause a build up of microscopic tears in the tissues leading to inflammation, swelling and pain.

The cycle of pain and dysfunction

The body has difficulty healing from repetitive strain injuries. First, muscles tighten around the injury, reducing the normal circulation necessary for healing. In addition, scar tissue begins to build in an attempt to repair tears in muscles and tendons. But scar tissue tends to be weaker and more rigid than healthy tissue, and can restrict the normal action of the muscles and tendons. When repetitive movements are continued, this tissue is likely to re-tear, causing more inflammation and swelling.

A cycle of pain and injury can begin, leading to decreased range of motion and a further reduction in circulation. Muscles weaken because they are painful to use, and other "compensatory" muscles attempt to pick up the workload, often becoming overused themselves. To make matters worse, swelling from inflammation and scar tissue may also press on nerves (as in carpal tunnel syndrome), causing additional pain and dysfunction. Help is often needed to stop the cycle.

Symptoms of repetitive strain injury

The first symptom of an RSI is pain with specific movements. Next, the pain will occur during other activities, and may last hours after you stop the activity. Other symptoms may include tingling, cold or numb-like sensations, hypersensitivity, and diminished coordination and dexterity.

You may even experience symptoms in areas distant, or "referred," from your injury. These may be caused by highly irritable spots at the injury site known as trigger points. Pain in the wrist, elbow or shoulders may also be referred from a ligament injury in your neck.

Causes of repetitive strain injury

Contributing factors to repetitive strain injuries can include: inadequate adjustment or sizing of your workstation, inefficient posture or improperly supported movement, fatigue, lack of physical tone, a sudden increase in activity, or diseases such as arthritis or diabetes. Stress overload or emotional states that lead to muscle tension, such as anxiety or anger, may also increase vulnerability to RSIs.

How can therapeutic massage help?

Massage therapy can decrease pain and enhance healing in a number of ways. It **reduces trigger points and increases pliability of scar tissue** in the tendons and other soft tissues, making movement easier and re-tearing less likely.

By improving blood and lymph circulation, massage can **help reduce painful swelling**, aid in the elimination of accumulated toxins, and speed oxygen and healing nutrients to the tissues.

Massage helps **relax tight muscles and improve range of motion** as shortened tissues are gently stretched and lengthened. It may also **improve posture or joint alignment**, reducing stress to your affected area and decreasing the possibility of reinjury.

Massage can also be used as a preventive measure, **releasing tension and reducing inflammation** before a repetitive strain injury develops.

