

## What is a Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI)?

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“Musculoskeletal injury” is a term typically used to describe an injury to muscles, nerves, joints, tendons, ligaments, bursa, spinal discs, etc. These types of injuries occur following exposure to **repetitive, awkward, forceful** loads that exceed the Individual’s capabilities. Some examples you may have heard about include: tennis elbow, shoulder tendonitis, thoracic outlet syndrome, carpal tunnel syndrome, and herniated disc.

Anyone at any age can develop a MSI. A MSI can develop during work, home, or leisure activities, and then be further aggravated by one or the other. While many MSIs will resolve on their own within a day or two, some will require medical attention and treatment.



### What to do when experiencing musculoskeletal discomfort

When starting a new activity (or new job, or after moving furniture around the house!), we may feel discomfort for the next day or two. This is from using our muscles in a different way than they are used to. MSIs can occur suddenly, like a sprained ankle, or develop over a prolonged period of time, like a shoulder tendonitis. Treating the injury as soon as possible leads to a faster recovery and prevents the injury from becoming worse.

- Rest (or scale down the activity as much as reasonable).
- Apply ice to reduce inflammation.
- Try using different tools, equipment, or techniques.
- Find out if your employer has resources you could take advantage of to ease your comfort at work, to keep you at work. E.g. modified job.



### Signs & Symptoms:

- Redness
- Swelling
- Restricted range of movement
- Loss of grip
- Reduced control or coordination
- Massaging a body part for pain relief
- Requiring additional breaks
- Reduced quality
- Sharp pain (with or without movement)
- Dull ache
- Burning, hypersensitivity
- Stiffness, tenderness
- Tingling, numbness
- Reduced range of motion

## Preventing MSIs

### When should you be concerned about your symptoms?

#### *Immediately!!*

Take note of your discomfort. If you discover it does not improve, or that it is following a pattern, make a change. Re-assess how you are doing the task, or ask someone for help.



If you suspect the injury may be due to your work, be sure to let your supervisor know, so that changes can be made while your symptoms are still in the 1st stage of an MSI (see right sidebar).

Remember that you may not be the only one who has reported discomfort, and your employer may have some solutions .

Earlier reporting leads to an earlier recovery.

One of the most important steps is to change what caused the discomfort in the first place. Therefore, **if you become injured, seek treatment AND make a change.**

### Many MSIs can be prevented and prevention works best when we know what to avoid.

- Musculoskeletal injuries typically result from a combination of: awkward posture, repetition and forceful loads. Secondary risk factors include: working in hot/cold temperatures, exposure to vibration, and contact pressure.
- As often as possible, use techniques and equipment that allow you to work in neutral postures and using minimal force demands.
- Limit exposure to vibration and ensure you are dressed and equipped appropriately to work in very hot and very cold environments.

### Stages of MSI

#### STAGE 1

- Discomfort for weeks/ months
- Reversible
- Improves away from work



#### STAGE 2

- Discomfort for months/ years
- Difficult to work
- Symptoms occur quickly, last longer



#### STAGE 3

- Symptoms always present
  - Sleep disrupted
  - Home activities affected
  - Poor recovery