

Tips, Strategies and News You Can Use To Achieve Optimum Health...For Life!

Aug 2006 Issue

Are Your Muscles Overworked and Underpaid?

Everyone has some type of repetitive strain injury to some degree or another. Take me, for instance. Much of the time, I'm hunched over my computer writing this newsletter. In fact, right now, I have a bit of numbness and tingling at night. But I know it's not going to last long. Why not? Because I know the inside secrets of preventing and treating Repetitive Strain Injury. And in this article, I'm going to reveal them to you, too.

What Is Repetitive Strain Injury Anyway?

Repetitive strain injuries are sometimes called repetitive stress injuries. In a nutshell, it is a condition from over-use. Repetitive strain injuries are defined as an occupational overuse syndrome that affects muscles, tendons, nerves in the arms and nerves in the upper back. Sometimes repetitive strain

injury is also known as work-related upper limb disorder.

Whatever terminology you prefer, the reason it occurs is simple: **muscles are kept tense for long periods of time due to poor posture and/or repetitive motions.** What I sometimes tell people is that your muscles "go on strike". In other words, they're overworked and underpaid. They don't get enough rest, nor do they get enough nutrients. Basically, they're not being treated very well.

That's the *reason* repetitive strain injury occurs. What actually happens is another story. Repetitive strain injuries are the result of tiny little injuries (called "micro trauma") to the muscles. These micro traumas accumulate over a long period of time until it finally reaches the exhaustion point: your muscles are no longer able to compensate or recover from the injuries because they aren't given ample time for rest and to absorb nutrients. Pain and muscle spasms then follow.

A contributing factor to Repetitive Strain Injury is **poor body mechanics** over a period of time. Examples of poor



Robert Inglis, MPT, CSCS

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1804 N. Placentia
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body mechanics are: Putting your arms and wrists in an unfavorable position; sustained gripping over a long period of time, excessive computer work or being hunched over a computer all day.

What Parts Of The Body Are Affected By Repetitive Strain Injury?

Tendons, muscles, ligaments and nerves are all affected by Repetitive Strain Injury. The most famous repetitive strain injury is **carpal tunnel syndrome**. Carpal tunnel is a condition where the nerve actually gets pinched. Tendonitis, trigger finger and thoracic outlet syndrome are all specific types of repetitive strain conditions.

Who Is Affected By Repetitive Strain Injury?

Almost everybody. However, some groups of people have a higher incidence than others. Anyone who performs repetitive actions is at a higher risk of Repetitive Strain Injuries such as:

- Physicians
- Surgeons
- Optometrists
- Contractors
- Plumbers
- Dentists
- Musicians
- Electricians
- And anyone who spends an extended period of time working on a computer (which covers almost all of us these days!)

Repetitive Strain Injury is an **extremely common condition**. You may even have a mild case right now and not even know it.

What Makes It Worse?

Anybody who suffers from Repetitive Strain Injury knows a stressful day can worsen their symptoms. Why? Because **stress increases muscle tension** and therefore, pain. Anxiety can also make it worse. While anxiety doesn't cause repetitive strain injury per se,



tense muscles often result from anxiety and exacerbate its symptoms. Many other factors such as poor physical fitness, long hours, stress, lack of breaks, bad ergonomics and poor static posture all play a role in repetitive strain injury. Since Repetitive Strain Injury is an unconscious neuromuscular type of response, it can **get worse with time**. Gradually, your muscles increase their tone in response to stress or repetitive motions, and get tighter and tighter. While everyone has a certain amount of resting tone in their muscles, people with higher stress levels have much tighter muscles.

How does stress cause increased tension? Simple. **Stress creates a restriction of circulation to the muscles, tendons and nerves during repetitive motions**. Your muscles are in a static state of contraction and the circulation stops. Many other factors besides stress also constrict blood flow to your extremities, starting a vicious cycle. For example, if you have an existing injury, sometimes that will exacerbate repetitive strain injury. Injured tissue enflames during repetitive motion and worsens symptoms.

Are There Any Warning Signs?

Yes. The warning signs of Repetitive Strain Injury are as follows:

- Recurring pain or soreness in the neck, shoulders, upper back, wrist or hands.
- Tingling, numbness, coldness, loss of sensation.
- Loss of grip strength.
- Lack of endurance, weakness or fatigue.
- Muscles of the arms and shoulders feel hard and wiry when touched
- Pain or numbness when lying in bed.

If you suspect you have Repetitive Strain Injury, you should first **see your doctor**. Then once you have an accurate diagnosis, follow these tips to help heal and/or prevent an occurrence:

Tip #1: Be Proactive

With any disorder or illness, you are always your best advocate. It's the same with Repetitive Strain Injury. Be proactive and seek out information about it. Go to the library, jump on the Internet or ask your doctor. The more proactive you are when treating Repetitive Strain Injury, the better your chances of recovery.

Tip #2: Listen to Your Body

Believe it or not, your doctor may not know much more than you about the **specifics** of your injury. So really, if you wish a complete recovery it's up to you. You must listen to your body. If you instinctively feel that something may be harmful to any part of your body, pay attention to that instinct. **Don't just push through it**. Don't ignore it (We men are particularly good at ignoring pain). Then see if you can determine which activities are actually causing the pain. The old motto, "No Pain, No Gain" does not apply here. Pain is a signal something is wrong. Listen to your body.

Tip #3: Pace Yourself

Take frequent **breaks** and pace yourself. Although experts differ the length of breaks you should take (and the frequency) you should take at least a 5-10 minute break from your workstation every 30 minutes or so. Not only does this give you a chance to rest your muscles, it also gives your eyes a break. Remember: **your eyes have muscles, too**. If you're straining your eyes,

you're looking forward more and probably leaning forward more as well. Get up and take a break (a very quick break for your eyes can be as simple as looking up from your computer monitor and focusing on a far wall for a moment or two).

Tip #4: Maintain Good Posture

Adhere to guidelines for proper posture. Good posture involves **keeping your bones properly aligned while moving or at rest**. Keep your muscles at their optimum length (and relaxed) rather than tight or over-stretched (See the tips in the box that the right on how to maintain good posture). Good posture helps alleviate the symptoms of Repetitive Strain Injury.

Tip #5: Achieve Good Workstation Ergonomics

Position yourself properly at your workstation. While posture means accommodating your body to your workstation, good ergonomics means positioning your workstation to your body...**making it easier to achieve good posture**.

How do you set up your workstation for "good ergonomics"? Easy. Just remember the "rule of right angles". A proper set up involves 90-degree right angles: Your feet are flat on the floor, calves perpendicular to the floor and thighs parallel to the floor. The angle between your back and thighs should be at least 90 degrees (a right angle). Arms should hang relaxed on your sides and forearms should project straight out in front of you at a right angle to your body. Your wrists should be straight, not arched upwards; wrists pads (or pad rests) for your keyboard can help. Next, you should be 18 to 20 inches away from your computer monitor and the screen should be adjusted so it's between 15 and 30 degrees below your straight line of sight. Finally, make sure your desk and chair are at the right angle for your body. Your chair is the most important piece of ergonomic furniture you have. That's because it supports your entire body. Invest in a good office chair.

Tip #6: Get Enough Sleep

Tired muscles are more prone to injury. If you're

not getting enough sleep (or not sleeping well) your body does not have enough time to recuperate from injury or bounce back from the demands placed on them during the day. Keep in mind that during sleep is when your body undergoes most of its repair. Get enough quality sleep every night.

Tip #7: Exercise

I know I keep harping on exercise every issue, but it's important. Exercise has so many benefits to your health - and impacts so many conditions - that I can't ignore it. With Repetitive Strain Injury, regular exercise prepares your body to cope with the stresses placed on it. Plus, a physically fit body "bounces back" from Repetitive Strain Injury much faster. A physical therapist can help design an exercise regimen for you. For example, exercises specifically designed to help strengthen the forearms and wrists can help. Exercise can also help develop the muscles that support your spine, skeleton and therefore your posture as well. Finally, specific exercises that reduce stress (such as Tai Chi) can also reduce the likelihood of suffering from repetitive strain injuries in the future.

Tip #8: Use Common Sense

Make sure you ask questions, trust your gut instinct's and do with right for YOU. This goes back to listening to your body. If something doesn't make sense to you, question. Being involved in your own treatment and healing is when the most important aspects of wellness.

Tip #9: Manage Your Pain

Adopt a sensible approach to pain management. As a rule, you should take primary responsibility for managing your own pain. For example, applying ice to a sore, painful area can reduce inflammation and pain. Low-intensity resistance exercises and stretches keep your muscles supple and pain free. Massage and soft tissue therapy works by decompressing the area around the actual injury which enhances circulation and promotes healing. Anti-inflammatory medications can help reduce swelling and therefore alleviate pain. Again, remember that muscles in pain are tense.

What Is Good Posture?

- Let your shoulders relax
- Let your elbows swing freely
- Keep your wrists straight
- Pull your chin in to look down (don't flop head forward)
- Try to maintain the "hollow" at the base of your spine so your lower back maintains its natural arch
- Try leaning back in your chair.
- Don't slouch or slump forward
- Alter your position from time to time (change your foot position and shift your weight)
- Get up and stretch every 20 -- 30 minutes

Tense muscles are more prone to injury.

Tip #10: Be Patient

Keep in mind that stresses on your body did not cause your repetitive strain injury over night. It took weeks, months and sometimes years to create these injuries. Conversely, you should not expect an overnight "cure". Your body is slow to forgive and slow to heal. Obviously, the better in shape you are, the younger you are and your genetics play a role in how quickly you heal.

Tip #11: Lower Your Stress

Again, reducing stress is critical in managing and preventing Repetitive Strain Injury. Try meditation, deep breathing and visualization exercises. Go for a walk. Learn Tai Chi. Exercise. All of this can help your body rebound from about of repetitive strain injury.

Repetitive Strain Injury affects us all to one degree or another. However, if you follow my recommendations on treating and/or preventing it, you'll reduce the symptoms and lessen the severity of this debilitating condition.

-- Robert Inglis, MPT, CSCS

As always, if you have any questions regarding this topic, please email me directly at mycorept@yahoo.com

“Ask-An-Expert”

Your Questions And Answers

Question: What are some of the reasons people cannot lose weight and keep it off?

Answer: If you have ever been frustrated because you can't seem to lose weight, you're not alone. There are many reasons why people struggle to lose weight and keep it off. Some factors (like genetics) may be difficult to control. However there are some things that are within your control and need to change. Here are the five most common factors that have negative effects on your ability to lose weight:

Reason #1: Starvation Diets - When you eat less than your resting metabolic rate, your body will think you are starving. As a result, you tend to gain weight rather than lose it.

Reason #2: Skipping Breakfast - Studies show that you will “over eat” during the day and night if you don't start your day with breakfast. I know you've heard it many times, but breakfast IS the most important meal of the day!

Reason #3: Stress - Stress releases a hormone called cortisol which causes weight gain. Eating food quickly or while you are stressed out can make you fat. That's one of the many benefits of exercise: it reduces stress levels, which in turn, reduces cortisol levels.

Reason #4: Eating At Night - Your metabolism slows down during evening hours and burns fat at a much slower rate. Eating before bed causes you to gain weight.

Reason #5: Improper Exercise - People either exercise too long or not enough. There are specific exercise parameters in which your body responds best. If you're not exercising in your optimum zone, you're cheating yourself of the gains you could be making with your exercise program.

Bottom Line: The key to successful weight loss is knowing how your unique metabolism responds to diet and exercise.

That's because each person's genetic makeup is different. Your body is different from your sister's and it's different from your friend's. How each person's body responds to various foods and exercise varies drastically from person to person. Therefore it is critical to gather as much information about your unique physiology as possible. How do you get information on your own metabolism? It's simple. The first step is a test called a “metabolic assessment”. Here's the data that a Resting Metabolic Test will provide you: **Total Caloric Expenditure At Rest, Total Daily Caloric Expenditure, Resting Thermogenesis/ Your Ability To Burn Fat, biomarkers used in scientific and medical research and more.**

These are the numbers that vary dramatically from person to person. If you don't know how your body responds, you're not going to lose weight long term.

Free Resting Metabolic Profile

I've arranged for you to receive a **FREE Metabolic Consultation**. This includes all the information discussed above. Normally, this kind of test is expensive and is only available in university and hospital laboratories. However, for a limited time, it has recently been made available through physical therapy clinics around the nation. We are offering you an opportunity to take advantage of a **FREE, no-obligation test that takes only 20 minutes to complete**...and gets you on the fast track to losing weight and feeling great about yourself. The results from this FREE metabolic test can be used in conjunction with a blood chemistry panel, thyroid levels, C-Reactive protein test and other medical tests performed by a physician to establish an exercise and nutrition program designed by a physical therapist, exercise physiologist and clinical dietitian. To set up your FREE Resting Metabolic Profile, **call 714-528-9400**.

Health Trivia - Test Your Health And Fitness Knowledge!

QUESTION #1:

What percentage of our energy intake comes from commercially-processed foods?

- a.) 10%
- b.) 27%
- c.) 34%
- d.) 72%

QUESTION #2:

Being out of balance by just 50 calories per day can add how many pounds per year to one's body weight?

- a.) 1 lb.
- b.) 5 lbs.
- c.) 10 lbs.
- d.) 15 lbs.

QUESTION #3:

Fill in the blank: Commercially prepared meals typically have more _____ than home-prepared meals.

- a.) Saturated fat and cholesterol
- b.) Calcium
- c.) Fiber

d.) Carbohydrates

QUESTION #4:

When most people are served a large portion of food, they will...

- a.) Eat the amount served
- b.) Save half for later
- c.) Split the portion with someone else
- d.) Ask for a smaller portion

QUESTION #5:

Successful reduced calorie meal planning requires that a person...

- a.) Knows the caloric content of the foods they consume
- b.) Know the portion size of the food they consume
- c.) Keep a record of food and beverage intake
- d.) All of the above

Answers:

d (5) a (4) a (4) b (2) c (2) d (1)

Powerful Pomegranates!

There's a new fruit craze. Pomegranates! The hype is centered around their powerful antioxidant make up. Pomegranates are loaded with phytochemical anti-oxidants called **polyphenols**. The polyphenols in pomegranates include anthocyanins and tannins, which are **among the most potent plant antioxidants around**.

Anti-oxidants are important because they help neutralize oxidants, also known as **free radicals**. Free radicals are everywhere. Our bodies produce them as a part of normal metabolism but are also in many external sources such as air pollution, alcohol, pesticides, sunlight, tobacco smoke, drugs, and even fried foods. Emerging science suggests free radicals can interfere with the body's metabolism and may even produce damage and disease that can accumulate over time.

With incredibly high levels of antioxidants, pomegranate juice is a true antioxidant superpower.



From Our Healthy Kitchen:

Cool Down Your Summer With Healthy Smoothie Snacks Made Quick and Easy!



Berry Smoothie

1 cup plain soy milk
1 plain non-fat yogurt
1 cup of fresh or frozen mixed berries
1 table spoon ground flaxseed
Place all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth

Flaxseeds have a mild, nutty flavor and provide a rich source of alpha-linolenic acid, an omega 3 fatty acid, dietary fiber, and lignans, unique cancer-blocking components.

Nutrients include 287 calories, 48 g carbs, 10g fiber, 10g protein, 8g fat, 0mg cholesterol, 80mg sodium, 250mg calcium.

Nutbutter Smoothie

1 cup plain soy milk
1 cup drained silken tofu
1 small frozen banana
1.5 tbsp natural nut butter (almond or cashew)
Ice

Place all ingredients in a blender and mix until smooth.

Bananas are rich in B6 and potassium, and taste great when paired with nut butters in a smoothie or as a snack.

Nutrients included 295 calories, 24g carbs, 4g fiber, 13g protein, 18g fat, 0mg cholesterol, 74mg sodium, 130mg calcium

Monthly Announcements and Upcoming Events

Call for a Free Acupuncture Visit!

Acupuncture is a traditional Eastern therapy now used widely in the US to treat a variety of conditions that involve acute or chronic pain. It uses the application of hair-fine needles, energy and pressure to specific points on the body. Each point corresponds to specific functions in the body. Treatment is also aimed at regulating the free flow of



vital energy or 'chi' to improve health the well being.

Acupuncturists may also use electrical stimulation (through needles), acupressure, oriental herbs, nutrition programs and exercises such as Qi Gong to facilitate healing and pain relief. After a careful evaluation by a licensed acupuncturist, treatment is determined based on clinical symptoms. Patients are usually treated lying down, but can be treated in other positions if required.

Insertion of the needles is generally painless and even unnoticeable by the patient. After insertion, the patients rest comfortably for 20-40 minutes, sometimes with the addition of infrared heat.

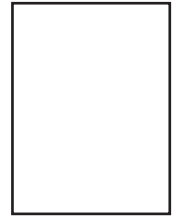
SPECIAL LIMITED TIME OFFER:
For the entire month of August, your initial treatment of Acupuncture is **FREE**. Treats chronic pain, insomnia, hypertension, stress. Call **714-528-9400** to schedule your visit!



Congratulations to Marissa Tice ATC!

Most of you know her as the girl with the "million dollar smile" but is a **drill sergeant when it comes to exercise!** Marissa has been accepted into Champan's Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. She will start classes full time at the end of August. Marissa will be greatly missed by the staff and patients but we wish her the very best! Good luck, Marissa!

Physical Therapy Specialists
1804 N. Placentia
Placentia, CA 92870
714-528-9400



Referral Reward Program

I'd like to thank those of you who have participated in the **Patient Referral Program!** Marketing for new clients costs us tons of time, money and energy. Like any company, we need new patients to stay in business. Over the years we have found that looking for new patients takes away from the time we would rather be spending *with you and for you* and treating other patients!

If I've already helped you with physical therapy, nutrition advice, metabolic testing, etc., then you know how well I serve my patients. When you refer your friends and relatives to us, everybody benefits. We can serve you better. We send you a nice gift. And we assure that we'll take the very best care of any friends or family that you refer

our way! For more information about our referral reward program, just give us a call at: **714-528-9400**. It's a great program where, as our way of saying "thanks", we send you a token of our appreciation for recommending our services!

Also: If you would like any of your friends, coworkers, relatives, business acquaintances, etc. to receive a FREE subscription to this newsletter, please call me at the same number: 714-528-9400. We'll also send them a note with their first issue telling them that you suggested they receive this newsletter, and to contact us if they would like it to stop at any time. *If you enjoy this newsletter, share it with people you know, with no hassle for you!*