

Health and Safety Matters

Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders



"My neck and shoulders are always hurting, I'm so tired and I just can't sleep" (unidentified patient); a common complaint of staff members suffering from 'MSDs'. What are MSDs and why do we hear so much about them lately? Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), also known as Repetitive Strain Injuries or Repetitive Motion Injuries, are malfunctions of the muscles, tendons or nerves in the body. They may be caused by work related activities which are repetitive, frequent, involve awkward postures or involve constant pressure applications. Pain is a primary symptom related to MSDs. Others include tense muscles, fatigue and, in later stages, lack of sleep. Risk assessments are a vital means to identifying workplace hazards which may lead to MSDs. Elements of frequency, intensity, duration and regularity of each task should be examined in an employee's work in order to recognize possible hazards for MSDs. The best way to prevent a risk is at the source, and therefore, by removing or eliminating the aggravating element of the work, the risk for MSDs is lowered. (CCOHS 2010)

The Ontario Ministry of Labour (MOL) has noted that MSDs are the most common type of workplace injury contributing to lost-time, relating to 43% of all lost-time claims (MOL 2010). With this type of impact, it is important that employers and employees take preventative measures to reduce the incidence of MSDs. The employer can take the following preventative actions:

- Advise and train workers about the MSD risk factors in their job and in the workplace
- Encourage workers to participate in the health and safety program through early reporting of MSD symptoms or concerns
- Identify and assess job related MSD risk factors
- Put in place controls to reduce workers' exposure to MSD risk factors
- Follow-up to make sure preventive measures are working. (MOL 2010)

This was identified as a priority area of focus for the MOL as part of a 2-month blitz from September 15, 2010 to November 15, 2010, with offenders receiving orders for enforcement actions.

Patterns of the following actions are associated with work-related MSDs:

- Fixed or constrained body positions
- Continual repetition of movements
- Force concentrated on small parts of the body, such as the hand or wrist
- A pace of work that does not allow sufficient recovery between movements. (CCOHS 2010)

Heat, cold and vibration are also commonly associated with the development MSDs. Possible solutions or control mechanisms for identified hazards for MSDs are:

- Mechanization
- Job Rotation
- Job Enlargement and Enrichment
- Team Work. (CCOHS 2010)

For their part, employees may also utilize some preventative measures to ensure reduced risk:

- Maintaining good health and fitness
- Reducing the amount of causal addiction associated with increased risk of MSDs such as smoking and consumption of caffeine or other comfort foods.
- Maintaining proper ergonomic posture and work habits

The primary principle that should be applied in changes being made for prevention is to design the workplace to fit the worker and not the other way around. After prevention and control measures are considered, another key activity is early identification of MSDs as they are easier to treat and result in faster recovery time (CCOHS 2010). Employees must identify when they are having difficulty and communicate with their managers.

Teamwork is an important element to successful programs. Employers, employees, employee representatives, occupational health and safety representatives and joint health and safety committee representatives should all work together to ensure healthy and safe environments in the workplace.

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) 2010 'Work-related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs)' Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Website (<http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/rmirsi.html>).

Ontario Ministry of Labour (MOL) 2010 'Prevent Pains and Strains in the Workplace' Ontario Ministry of Labour Website (http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/sawo/pubs/fs_msd.php).

Health and Safety Matters

Have a Safe Walk - To and From Your Car

Workplace hazards don't always end at the workplace door. Depending on the location and design of the parking lot and what time of day you arrive and leave, a parking lot can present a risk of workplace violence. To increase your safety in any parking lot, you should have a plan, know where you can go for safety and how to call for help. You can reduce the risk of harm by practising the following safety tips.

Park as close as possible to your building or destination in a highly visible, well-lit area. If there is a parking lot attendant, park nearby. In an underground lot, choose spots that are near the stairs or a well-lit exit. When entering the building, use the main entrance rather than a rear or secluded exit.

Keep your valuables out of sight - this includes your purse, wallet and any recent purchases. If you must leave them in the car, lock your valuables in the trunk. When getting back into your vehicle, immediately lock the doors and keep your windows closed.

It's not always the parking itself that can be dangerous. It can be walking to and from your vehicle in the early morning, after dark, when there isn't a lot of traffic in the area or in a high-risk neighbourhood. In these situations, stay on well-lit streets and in the centre of the sidewalk. Stay away from potential hiding spots for predators, such as bushes, doorways, alleys and other parked cars. Cross the road or alter your route if necessary.

During times or at locations of high risk, walk with a friend, a co-worker, or a security officer. When someone has walked you to your car, give your escort a ride back to the main entrance so that he or she won't have to walk alone. If you must walk to your car

without an escort, ask a friend or co-worker to watch you from a window, and wave to that person. It's even a good idea to wave to an imaginary person if necessary, to give the illusion that someone is watching.

Be aware of your surroundings. Walk with confidence, head held high, looking around. Look directly at people you meet but without staring. If you get an unsafe feeling, trust your instincts.

Stay alert. Avoid wearing headphones or being distracted by using your cell phone. Do not dig into your purse or bag, and do not carry heavy briefcases or bags that could get in the way.

Always have your car and building keys ready for locking or unlocking. Make sure you have quick access to a whistle or personal alarm, just in case. Before entering your car, take a quick look around, inside and even underneath it to make sure you don't have an uninvited guest. If you have any suspicions, walk away, go to a safe place and call for help.

Many parking lots are well designed, but if you are not sure, or feel uncomfortable - remember - when in doubt, err on the side of safety.



Source: Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (www.ccohs.ca)

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Taking the Stairway to Health

The key to good health is healthy living. Keeping yourself informed about positive health practices is an important way to improve your overall health and sense of well being! Physical activity improves health.

Question: I work all day and don't have time to exercise! What can I do to increase my physical activity?

Answer: Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that we accumulate 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity each day. Stair climbing can be accumulated over the course of your day. Using the stairs burns twice as many calories as walking. Regular stair climbing can lead to weight loss, greater leg strength, improved bone density, aerobic capacity and good cholesterol.

Cost of a Gym membership: \$300-500/year
Cost of an outfit to wear to the gym: \$100
Cost of a good pair of work-out shoes: \$100
Cost of taking the stairs whenever possible during the day...Priceless

Read more about the Stairway to Health benefits.

Source: City of Toronto Employee Health and Rehabilitation

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www.glasbergen.com



"My doctor told me to start my exercise program very gradually. Today I drove past a store that sells sweat pants."



You Asked:

Q: *Is it true that I'll get the maximum health benefit if I both exercise and eat my biggest meal in the morning?*

A: *That depends. For weight loss, morning workouts may be somewhat better. Some evidence suggests that exercising before breakfast burns more fat than later workouts, which are fueled mainly by proteins and carbohydrates from the day's earlier meals (if you have heart disease, however, morning workouts may slightly increase your risk of heart attack). Afternoons are probably better for building strength and endurance since aerobic capacity, muscle strength, flexibility, coordination and reaction time all peak between 4:00 and 7:00 pm. But the most important consideration is just to find a workout time that you enjoy, since that will help you make exercise a regular habit. As for your biggest meal, the timing doesn't really matter, with one exception: stuffing yourself shortly before bedtime can lead to poorer sleep, since the body is still working hard to digest the food.*

Q: what is the most nutritious part of the broccoli plant?

A: The florets contain substantially more cancer-fighting phytochemicals and beta-carotene (a precursor of vitamin A) than the stalks, and about the same amounts of minerals and vitamin C. Whether you're eating the florets or the stalks, broccoli that's raw or lightly cooked (by microwaving or steaming) will supply the most nutrients. For a healthy sandwich or salad topping, look for broccoli sprouts which pack 20 to 50 times more phytochemicals than the full-grown plant and comparable amounts of vitamins and minerals.



Source: Consumer Reports on Health

Health and Safety Matters

Alzheimer's Disease Reducing Caregiver Stress

Supporting a person with Alzheimers disease requires time and energy. The last issue of "Health and Safety Matters" outlined the 10 signs of caregiver stress. This issue will discuss the 10 ways to reduce caregiver stress.

As a caregiver, you need to take care of yourself. You may well be the most important person in the life of someone with Alzheimer's disease. There are things you can do to help maintain your health and well-being.

- 1. Learn about the disease. Knowing as much as you can about the disease and care strategies will prepare you for the Alzheimer journey. Understanding how the disease affects t he person will help you comprehend and adapt to the changes.*
- 2. Be realistic about the disease. It is important, though difficult, to be realistic about the disease and how it will affect the person over time. Once you are realistic, it will be easier for you to adjust your expectations.*
- 3. Be realistic about yourself. You need to be realistic about how much you can do. What do you value most? A walk with the person you are caring for, time by yourself, or a tidy house? There is no "right" answer; only you know what matters most to you and how much you can do.*
- 4. Accept your feelings. When caring for a person with Alzheimer's diease, you will have many mixed feelings. In a single day, you may feel contented, angry, guilty, happy, sad, embarrassed, afraid and helpless. These feelings may be confusing. But they are normal. Recognize that you are doing the best you can.*

- 5. Share the information and feelings with others. Sharing information about the disease with family and friends will help them understand what is happening and better prepare them to provide the help and support you need. It is also important to share your feelings with someone you are comfortable talking to.*
- 6. Be positive. Your attitude can make a difference to the way you feel. Try to look at the positive side of things and focus on what the person can do, as opposed to the abilities lost. Try to make every day count Be positive. Learn about the disease. Knowing as much as you can about the disease and care strategies will prepare you for the Alzheimer journey. Understanding how the disease affects t he person will help you comprehend and adapt to the changes.*
- 7. Look for humour. You may find that certain situations have a bright side. Maintaining a sense of humour can be a good coping strategy.*
- 8. Take care of yourself. Your health is important. Do not ignore it. Eat proper meals and exercise regularly7. Find ways to relax and try to get the rest you need. Make regular appointments for check ups. You also need to take regular breaks from caregiving.*
- 9. Get help. You need the support that comes from sharing thoughts and feelings with others. This could be individually, with a professional, or as part of an Alzheimer support group. Also, ask for practical help. You cannot care for a person with Alzheimer's disease alone. Ask family and friends to assist you. There may also be programs n your community that offer assistance with household chores or caregiving tasks.*
- 10. Plan for the future. This can help relieve stress. While the person with Alzheimer's is still capable, review his or her financial situation and plan accordingly. Choices relating to future health and personal care decisions should be considered and recorded. Legal and estate planning should also be discussed. Think about an alternate caregiving plan in the event that you are unable to provide care in the future.*

Source: Alzheimer Society of Canada

Health and Safety Matters

RECIPE:

Pumpkin-Spice Biscotti

Introduction

Whole grain flour can be substituted for white flour for extra fibre in these fall-flavoured treats.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup unsalted raw shelled pumpkin seeds
- 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup coarse

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 300F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, stir flour with sugar, pumpkin seeds, pumpkin spice, baking powder and salt.
3. In a separate bowl, whisk eggs with pumpkin puree, butter and vanilla extract. Pour egg mixture into flour mixture and stir to combine.

4. Transfer dough to a lightly floured surface. Shape into 2 long, flat logs about 2 in. wide and 1/2 in. thick (the dough will rise as it bakes).
5. Sprinkle coarse sugar on top of logs, pressing gently so it adheres. Bake for 30 min. until centres are firm to the touch
6. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 min. Reduce oven temperature to 275F. Using a serrated knife, cut logs into 1/2 inch pieces.
7. Place cut-side down on the baking sheet and bake for an additional 35 min. Cool completely on a rack.

Makes 42 biscotti.

Per biscotti: 75 calories, 1 g protein, 12 g carbs, 3 g fat, 21 mg sodium.

Source: Canadian Living, Oct. 2010



Did you know?

Keeping a food diary will help you lose weight. One study cited in the American Journal of Preventative Medicine found that those who tracked their food lost twice as much as those who didn't.

Source: Canadian Living, Oct. 2010

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Hearing Loss

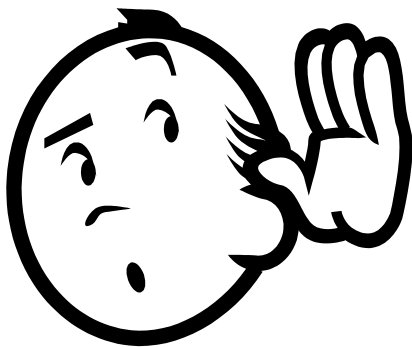
Gradual loss of hearing used to be thought of as a problem for elderly people, but in recent decades there has been a sharp increase in the number of younger people with hearing difficulties. The increase in hearing loss earlier in life is attributed to general environmental noise that is present at much higher levels today than in the past. The number of people with hearing loss is expected to increase further as the baby-boomer generation ages.

Gradual age-related and noise-induced hearing loss occurs when delicate hair cells in the inner ear - where sound waves are transformed into nerve impulses - are damaged. The damage can occur from aging or as the result of abuse.

Don't take your hearing for granted. Hearing loss cannot be reversed. You can, however, take steps to avoid noise-induced hearing loss by wearing hearing protection such as ear plugs, and by reducing the loudness setting when listening to recorded music on a home stereo system or with earphone devices. If you wait until the damage is done it will be too late to reverse it - so protect your hearing now.

The [Canadian Hearing Society's website](#) offers helpful general information.

Source: City of Toronto Employee Health and Rehabilitation



Final Word:



Stress Management - A Lesson

A lecturer, when explaining stress management to an audience, raised a glass of water and asked, "How heavy is this glass of water?"

Answers called out ranged from 20g to 500 g.

The lecturer replied, "The absolute weight does not matter. It depends on how long you try to hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case, it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

He continued, "And that's the way it is with stress management. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burdens become increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on. As with the glass of water, you have to put them down for a while and rest before holding them again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the task.

Whatever burdens you're carrying now, set them down for a moment if you can and rest a while before picking them up again." (Author unknown)

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