



**Mount  
Sinai**

*Selikoff Centers for  
Occupational Health*



# Repetitive Strain Injury: What is it and how is it caused?

Repetitive strain injuries (RSI) or cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs) are conditions most often caused by the repetitive use of parts of the body while performing work and recreational activities. Typically RSI is a result of a work task performed repetitively putting strain on the muscles, tendons, soft tissue and often affecting the nerves. Some examples of activities that can cause RSI are computer use, carpentry, material handling, or even recreational activities such as playing tennis or golf.

## **ONSET**

Patients may experience symptoms such as throbbing, twinges, tingling, and fatigue which gradually worsens over time. Individuals often ignore discomfort, hoping it will “go away.”

## **EARLY INTERVENTION**

Early diagnosis and intervention can diminish and eliminate RSI most quickly. A physician with expertise in evaluating and diagnosing work-related injuries can recommend treatment that helps patients get better. Ergonomic assessments and other therapeutic interventions may be part of their recommendation.

## **ERGONOMICS**

An ergonomic assessment includes a survey of one’s workstation set up, work-tools, and job tasks. The assessment, in conjunction with education on healthy work habits, will support sustained workplace wellness.

## **RISK FACTORS**

The risks associated with activities that can cause RSI are repetitive tasks, forceful exertions, contact stress, vibration and on-going awkward positions. By eliminating risk factors, RSI can be prevented, managed, and healed most effectively.

## **RSI DIAGNOSES**

Below are diagnoses classified as RSIs:

- *Bursitis*, which occurs when the bursa, a fluid filled sac which acts as a cushion, becomes inflamed. Pain is generally felt at the site of inflammation.
- *Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS)* is caused by the compression or irritation of the median nerve that is found in the wrist area. Patients with CTS often complain of numbness in their first three fingers, a banded feeling around the wrist, and/or weakness of the hand.
- *Epicondylitis*, a type of tendinitis, is found at the elbow where the muscles and tendons meet. Often referred to as “tennis elbow” and “golfers elbow,” it occurs as a result of overuse of the muscles and can present at first with twinges and a burning sensation.
- *Trigger finger* occurs as a result of inflammation of the tendon sheaths causing the finger to get stuck when bent.





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The Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health are dedicated to providing **cutting-edge clinical services** with a focus on **prevention** to keep workers **healthy** and their workplaces **safe**. Our physicians are leaders in the field of occupational medicine, providing care to injured and ill workers and retirees in the **New York City** and **Lower Hudson Valley** regions.

Our **highly skilled** and **multilingual team** of physicians, nurse practitioners, industrial hygienists, ergonomists, and benefits specialists provide comprehensive **patient-centered** services. We also help employers evaluate the work environment and establish integrated occupational health protection and health promotion programs to advance the general health and well-being of their entire workforce.

Our **medical experts** and **outreach team** members visit organizations, unions, and employers to bring **quality training** and **education** programs to the communities serviced by our clinical centers.

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#### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

For an appointment or more information:

[www.mountsinai.org/selikoff](http://www.mountsinai.org/selikoff)

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