

# It's International RSI Awareness Day Again



Once again, it's International Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Awareness Day, which is celebrated this year on Feb. 28, 2017. A day was set aside across the globe to focus on RSIs because such injuries are among the most common injuries in all types of workplaces, from factories and construction sites to offices. For example, according to Statistics Canada, more than 2.3 million Canadians suffer from RSIs or musculoskeletal disorders, most of which are work-related.

RSIs, also called musculoskeletal injuries or disorders (MSIs or MSDs), usually affect tendons, muscles, nerves and joints, such as the hips, knees and feet. RSIs can be caused by:

- Exposure to excessive vibrations
- Improper lifting techniques
- Poor posture while working
- Infrequent breaks.

To protect workers from developing RSIs and to comply with the requirements in the OHS laws to address ergonomics-related hazards, which are often the source of these injuries, take these four steps:

**Step #1:** Identify and assess ergonomics-related hazards, such as those posed by pushing and pulling materials or equipment. (Read about a NIOSH study in which scientists adapted risk assessment methods typically used in chemical risk assessment to assess and identify specific factors related to low back pain among a group of manufacturing workers.)

**Step #2:** Take steps to eliminate the identified hazards, such as by raising seats, lowering shelves or making other adjustments to work stations.

**Step #3:** Implement safe work procedures for activities likely to cause RSIs, such as manual materials handling.

**Step #4:** Train workers on how to protect themselves from RSIs, such as by using safe lifting techniques.

The OHS Insider has many articles, tools and other resources that you can use to raise awareness of ergonomics and protect workers from developing RSIs,

including:

- A case study showing that the benefits of participatory ergonomics continue for years and another study on a textile plant in Ontario that saved almost \$300,000 from its ergonomics program
- 5 mistakes to avoid in managing your ergonomics program
- Steps workers can take to help address ergonomics-related hazards
- Seven strategies to ensure that your ergonomics program is successful.

In addition, here's a sampling of just a few of the many RSI-related tools you can download, adapt and use in your own workplace:

- Overexertion Toolbox Talk Handout
- 10 commandments of ergonomics
- Model Ergonomics Policy
- Lifting Hazard Assessment Checklist
- Office Ergonomics Risk Factor Checklist
- Model Worker MSI Symptom Survey.

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