

Overuse or Repetitive Strain Injuries



Overuse or repetitive strain injuries are the result of cumulative tissue damage from repetitive use and can affect any part of the musculoskeletal system. We are all at risk as most occupational or recreational activity requires repetitive movement. Age, sex and anatomical make up may also play a role in the onset of overuse injury.

Overuse injury refers to an array of diagnosis which can affect a variety of joints, for example: wrist - carpal tunnel syndrome; shoulder - frozen shoulder; elbow – epicondylitis or general neck and back pain.

Tissues such as cartilage, muscles, ligaments and tendons adapt to their environment and the stresses placed on them. Mechanical fatigue from repetitive movement results in characteristic alteration in the properties and biomechanical function of all tissue. As tissue adapts to demand, it may become dysfunctional and incur injury.

Overuse injuries can create significant morbidity. Impact may vary from the occasional annoyance to loss of function. Functional change at even a minor level can result in a significant loss of lifestyle and therefore mental and physical wellbeing.

Without appropriate rest, healing or treatment, injuries become symptomatic, as the rate of injury exceeds adaptation and healing. Symptoms may include reduced movement, tenderness, pain, swelling, redness, grinding or popping sounds and physical derangement. When symptoms are experienced, the first action should be to rest, avoid the inciting activity and seek professional care. A chiropractor would assess your complaint, design a treatment program and if indicated, make recommendations relating to various forms of pain relief.

The aim of all treatment is to relieve symptoms, restore function and prevent return of the injury. Treatment may include joint mobilisation, massage, dry needling, stretching and exercising, heat and / or ice therapy.

Chiropractors provide additional information on workplace set up, training regimes, equipment or movement modifications to aid recovery and return to activity. Overuse injuries often resolve within 3-6 months.

Prevention:

- Knowledge of correct movement patterns
- Modified activities, training and postural techniques
- Early diagnosis and treatment
- Minimisation of external stresses, such as vibration and force
- Stretching, mobilising, heat/ice therapy, pharmaceutical intervention when indicated