



Tailgate Safety Training for Landscaping and Horticultural Services

Agricultural Safety Program, 590 Woody Hayes Drive, Columbus, OH 43210

Repetitive Motion

Objective: Identify the potential for injury in tasks requiring repetitive motion.

How to Use This Module

Repetitive motion can cause injuries from annoying to debilitating. For this module:

- Read the information below on causes and symptoms of repetitive motion injuries.
- Share your own experience with repetitive motion injuries with other workers.
- Discuss ways you can change work practices to prevent injuries.
- Review the important points.
- Take the True/False quiz to check your learning.

Background

Repetitive motion injuries occur when some action, usually involving bending or twisting, is done repeatedly. It can also be called cumulative trauma disorder or CTD. Pain or other warning signs may develop slowly. Many areas can be affected, but the most common are fingers, hands, wrists, elbows, arms, shoulders, back, and neck.

If pain occurs in any area, do not ignore it. The pain will not go away. Instead, it will get worse. The injury will become more severe as time passes.

Repetitive Motion That Can Lead to Injuries

- Repetitive action of the hand or arm
- Bending at the wrist
- Grasping or pinching objects
- Frequently raising the arm and/or the shoulder
- Applying force with the hand or arm
- Examples:
 - ◆ Pruning
 - ◆ Potting plants

- ◆ Packing plants into boxes
- ◆ Moving rolls of sod
- ◆ Sweeping floors.

Symptoms of an Injury

- Waking due to pain
- Numbness
- Tingling
- Swelling or tenderness
- Continuous aches
- Loss of strength
- Loss of joint movement
- Crackling
- Decreased coordination

Prevention

Prevention means working and playing smart. To eliminate repetitive motion injuries, try to adapt work activities. Plan how to use or move equipment so that the same motions are not repeated over and over. Be aware of repetitive motion used on and off the job. Repetitive motion trauma is most likely to occur after applying pressure or doing the same motion over and over. If pain occurs in spite of prevention, contact your doctor for an evaluation. Receiving an early evaluation and treatment is important.

Treatment

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help reduce inflammation and pain. Regular follow up visits with your doctor should be scheduled to check your progress. For more serious cases, you may be referred to an occupational therapist.

In most cases the doctor will remove a person from the situation that is causing the injury. Time away from the situation, followed by a gradual return to an improved work situation, will be suggested by the doctor. Strengthening hand and arm muscles with exercise may be another suggestion. An improved work situation could be accomplished by simply changing motions so the same motion isn't continuously repeated. Including short rest breaks into your daily routine may also help.

Consider These Tips

- Avoid repeating the same motion for a long period of time.
- Work in a comfortable position.
- Force can cause injury to nerves, muscles, and tendons.
- Get plenty of rest.

Review These Important Points

- Work smart before using tools and equipment.
- Be aware of the repetitive motions included in your work.

- If pain or numbness occurs, see a doctor.
- Change work habits to change the repetitive motion.

About These Modules

The author team for the training modules in the landscape and horticultural tailgate training series includes Dee Jepsen, Program Director, Agricultural Safety and Health, Ohio State University Extension; Michael Wonacott, Research Specialist, Vocational Education; Peter Ling, Greenhouse Specialist; and Thomas Bean, Agricultural Safety Specialist. Modules were developed with funding from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Grant Number 46E3-HT09.

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Answer Key: 1 = T, 2 = T, 3 = F, 4 = T, 5 = T.

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Name _____

True or False?

1. Tingling or numbness in the fingers, hand, or arm is a sign of repetitive motion injuries. T F
2. Preventing repetitive motion problems starts with learning to work and play smart. T F
3. There is no need to worry about changing work habits to change a motion that is repeated over and over. T F
4. Not having enough rest limits recovery from the motions and pressure that can lead to problems. T F
5. Repetitive motion injuries are caused by the simple actions of bending or twisting the body. T F