Repetitive Motion for Trainers and Supervisors

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

*Trainer’s Note*

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

- Discuss the information below on causes and symptoms of repetitive motion injuries.
- Discuss how to avoid or correct problems.
- Ask workers to discuss their own experience with repetitive motion injuries.
- Review the important points.
- Have workers take the True/False quiz to check their 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
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.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the U.S. Department of Labor.

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Repetitive Motion

**Name____________________________________**

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__