

Appendix I-C-9

Signs and Symptoms of Musculoskeletal Injury (MSI) Handout

It is important for council and employees to recognize the early signs and symptoms of MSI. A sign can include: swelling, redness or difficulty moving a particular body part. A symptom can be: numbness, tingling and pain.

Signs and symptoms can appear suddenly (i.e. from a single incident that causes an injury) or can appear gradually over time.

An MSI can affect your ability to perform tasks at work and at home. Signs or symptoms of MSI can worsen causing long term effects such as:

- muscle strains to the neck, back and shoulder or legs;
- tendonitis (swelling of a tendon, a band of tissue that attaches muscle to bone); and
- carpal tunnel syndrome (pressure on a nerve in the wrist, resulting in numbness, tingling pain, weakness in the hand, wrist or forearm).

The following hazards can cause musculoskeletal injury:

Repetitive Motion: Performing the same sequence of actions for an extended period of time with little or no change in the muscles used (i.e. working at your computer).

Forceful Exertion: Performing an action that has the potential to overload the body tissues (i.e. carry a heavy item up stairs).

Vibration: The direct transfer of repeating (back and forth) movements of a machine, or tool, to the body. Vibration can be classified as hand-arm (i.e. using a vibrating hand tool for prolonged periods) or whole body vibrations (i.e. vibration transmitted through a vehicle cab to the operators' body).

Mechanical Compression: External pressure on the soft tissues, either at high forces and/or for prolonged periods of time (i.e. leaning on a barrier; resting a hand, wrist, or elbow on the desk while typing; or tools digging into the hand).

Sustained or Awkward Posture/Limitation on Motion or Action: Work elements (tools, workstations, processes, etc.) that force the worker to adopt body positions that increase the stress on the joints or soft tissues of the body (i.e. twisting the upper body, and over-reaching).

If you are experiencing signs and symptoms of MSI, inform your supervisor and seek medical attention. Treatment can vary according to the type of injury. Treatment can include: application of cold or heat, medication, physical therapy or surgery. An injury can be treated more effectively if it is discovered early. **Do not ignore early signs and symptoms of MSI. You may need treatment or need to take steps to prevent the injury from worsening.**