

REPETITIVE MOTION SYNDROME CARPEL TUNNEL

(Employee Name)

(Date)

The greater availability of computers and the advent of word processing has caused dramatic changes in the office work environment over the past decade. These changes have resulted in a new set of medical problems caused by repetitive motion and overuse of extremities.

Many of the problems have involved the wrist and have been related to the use of the computer keyboard. Fortunately, the problems are usually not serious and are easily corrected. Pain develops when individuals sit at the keyboard and enter data into the computer for too long a period without taking a break. Incorrect placement of the keyboard increases the likelihood of a problem developing.

To date, only a few patients with overuse problems have been seen at the Health Unit. The majority of these has been carpal tunnel syndrome (wrist) cases and was caught early; consequently, the patients responded well to treatment. It is possible that more people in the Foundation are experiencing minor degrees of difficulty. If that is the case, the Health Unit would like to see such persons as early as possible when simple management of the problem is more likely to be effective.

Everyone is potentially at risk for an overuse injury, but simple preventative care can greatly reduce its likelihood. Two preventive considerations are:

- (1) Avoid extensive use of the computer or word processor without breaks. It is advisable to take a break for at least five minutes each hour, leaving the work station, and doing a totally different activity during that period.
- (2) The comfort and ergonomics of work station should be appropriate. The seat should be of proper height and give adequate support. The monitor should be at the proper distance and in a comfortable position to use and the keyboard should be situated so that the wrist is in a neutral position (straight with neither extending nor flexing of the wrist required).

Attention to the simple precautions above should prevent development of repetitive motion problems. Additional information is available at the Health Unit and they would be pleased to discuss the matter further with interested employees. Anyone who suspects that they might be having repetitive motion problems (most commonly of the wrist and below) is advised to contact the Health Unit.