

HINDMARSH AND FITZROY PHYSIOTHERAPY

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MOUSE RELATED PAIN



Injuries from using a computer mouse are getting a lot of attention. In addition to the problems we encounter from poor posture, prolonged sitting and forward neck posture of working at a computer, the mouse use itself can create musculoskeletal issues. This is primarily because we use a mouse for most computer activity and often put the mouse in a poor location or do not use it properly, predominantly without appropriate arm support. The typical mouse-related injury also occurs when we are over reaching for the mouse or when the space to move the mouse is too small

WHAT IS GOING ON

Mouse related pain can develop over weeks or months of use. This repetitive strain injury (RSI) from constant repetitive movements in a limited area can lead to real problems in your upper back, neck, shoulder, elbow or wrist. Often using a mouse for hours at work, only to go home and continue for even more hours. You may also hear these problems referred to simply as a repetitive strain injury or work-related upper limb disorder



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WHERE USING A MOUSE CAN CAUSE PAIN:

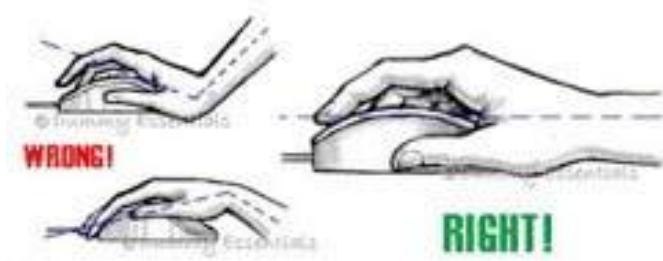
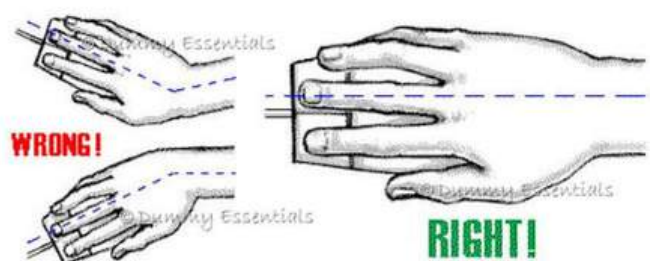
SHOULDER

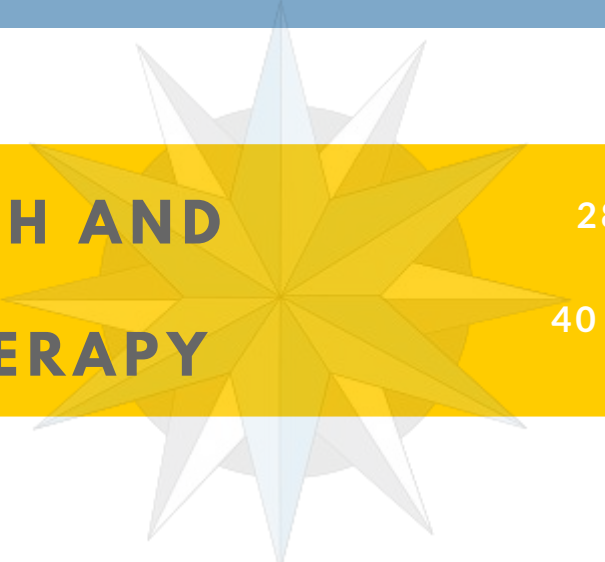
Shoulder pain for computer users involves the muscles and tendons being held tensed in one posture for long periods. Often your shoulder posture is not at rest but supporting your mouse arm or your other arm and not in a resting position. The result is muscle/tendon fatigue which ends in your shoulder pain. Reaching up, down or away for the mouse often causes pain in the shoulder too. This awkward posture increases strain on all the joints and tendons of the shoulder. This reach also fatigues the muscles of the back and neck . Poor posture with rounded shoulders and constant sitting can contribute to the irritation of the rotator cuff as well.

ELBOW

Mouse elbow is common amongst office workers due to prolong point-and-click motions on the computer mouse and is also commonly referred to as golfers or Tennis elbow, -medial or lateral epicondylitis.

Mouse elbow is a common overuse injury due to the degeneration and collagen changes to the tendons on the outside or inside of the elbow. It is often due to repetitive stress on your forearm with this point-and-click motions from moving a computer mouse. With continuous stress, the tendons and muscles may hurt even at rest, resulting in a weakened handgrip.





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WRIST

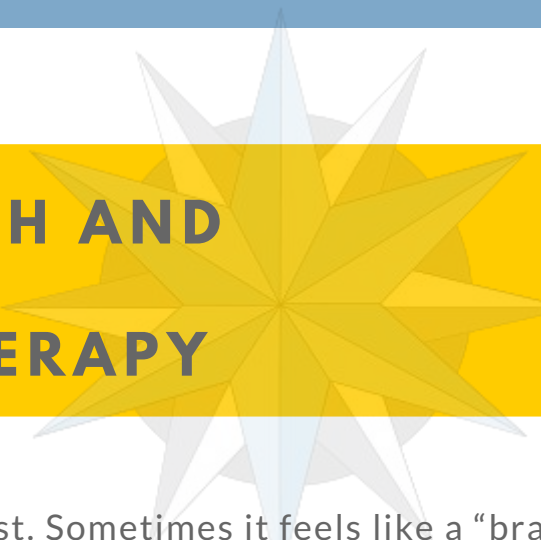
You can also develop pain here if you use small wrist motions to move the mouse or if the area to use the mouse is too small. Continuously scrolling and clicking can also lead to pain from overuse of the hand and forearm muscles. Prolonged wrist extension, flexion or sideways postures can also cause joint and tendon irritation.

Resting your wrist on the edge of the desk or keyboard tray when using the mouse can also lead to pain. This direct pressure can reduce blood flow, increase pressure within the wrist, and irritate tendons. Resting of the whole forearm is advisable rather than resting just the wrist.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a painful condition that can also occur when the median nerve is compressed as it passes through the carpal tunnel at the wrist. This leads to episodes of pins and needles in the hand. Compression at the wrist or swelling of the wrist tendons reduces this space and puts pressure on the nerves. Typically, one will feel tingling or numbness at night. Sometimes there will be pain or muscle weakness and in prolonged cases wasting may be present around the thumb.

SUMMARY OF SOME SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF MOUSE RELATED INJURY

- Muscle tightness at the top of the shoulder and close to the neck. The pain may also occur between the shoulder blades.
- Pain at the front of the shoulder or outside the upper arm from irritated rotator cuff tendons
- Pain on the outside or inside of the elbow and forearm muscles.
- Numbness and tingling in the palm and wrist, this may be the start of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.



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- Pain around the wrist. Sometimes it feels like a “bracelet of pain”.
- Pain on the little finger or thumb side of the hand. The pain may occur at the right or left side of the wrist or up to the forearm.
- Pain in the back of the fingers and hand. Pain may involve burning, soreness, shooting pain, numbness and tingling or discomfort

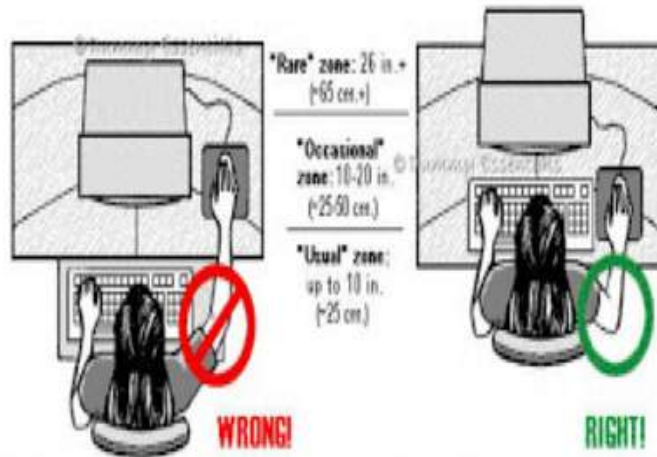
HOW TO PREVENT MOUSE RELATED PAIN

- Proper mouse placement. The mouse should be at the same level as your keyboard and positioned as close to the keyboard as possible. Try to avoid using a mouse that is on a platform lower than the keyboard tray, because this results in bending your wrist backward.
- Try to look at your positioning, how you sit, your desk and chair height, where your mouse is and general workplace set up.
- Another option is to place the keyboard and mouse on the desktop and raise your chair so that you can type comfortably. You may need to raise the monitor too.
- Ask for an ergonomic assessment
- Do not squeeze the mouse. Hold it loosely in your hand with a relaxed grip.
- Keep your hand and wrist straight
- When using the mouse move the mouse with mostly shoulder and arm motions with some wrist motions.
- Protect your wrist: Do not rest your wrists on the edge of the desk or keyboard tray. This places pressure directly over the carpal tunnel and tendons of the forearm.
- Rest your hand when you are not using the mouse. By letting go of the mouse and resting your hand, you can give your muscles a break.
- Take frequent short breaks and stretch often.
- Learn alternative keyboard commands. Short-cut keys can reduce mouse gripping and clicking.

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- Alternate with a standing desk if you have one.
- Learn to use the mouse in the other hand and alternate or trying a different type of pointing device or even using a mouse in each hand.
- Try to bring the mouse nearer your body/keyboard so you're not reaching out, which may be what's causing the strain as well as the general static positioning.
- Your elbow should stay somewhere near your side with your forearm at ninety degrees to your upper arm and your upper arm vertical in line with your body - it's meant to be one that which doesn't cause strain - reaching forward certainly does.
- Sometimes people find a smaller keyboard helps and/or a trackball or touch pad or vertical mouse.
- The mouse is not the only culprit .The problem is also using a mouse without proper arm support. Support your arm on a large surface or the arm of your chair if it's level with your desk, or use a support device that allows you to keep your arm in a relaxed position.
- But most importantly, take frequent rests and breaks, let your arm relax and hang, get some movement into your shoulders - shrugs, swings, rotations. Stand up and walk around.
- Try not to rest your hand on the mouse or desk top when not absolutely necessary. The whole idea is to try not to let your arm get strained at all by un-natural positions and not to leave it static or under any strain at any time.
- Check your chairs armrests- they should just slide under your desk.

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SOME EXERCISES TO HELP

- Gently move your head forward and backwards, look side to side and bend sideways left to right. "Double" chin tucks to reverse the forward head posture.
- Look up at the corners of the room to reactivate sleepy neck postural muscles
- Do shoulder circles each way, bring one arm across your chest at a time, pull your shoulder blades together to open up your chest.
- Stretch your forearm muscles with straight elbows by stretching your wrists forwards and then backwards
- Clench and unclench your fists
- Practice some deep breathing exercises in correct posture
- There are many desk exercises you can do for your neck, shoulders, elbows and wrists- speak with our physios for more help with this.
- Most importantly get up and move - take short breaks to go to the printer, get a drink rather than have your water at the desk, speak to a colleague, put rubbish in a bin away from the desk etc.

OTHER RESOURCES

We are passionate about providing our patients and community with information on prevention and management

Please visit our Blogs at hindmarshphysio.com.au for easy access to up to date information on many common conditions or click below for your monthly update



- *This PDF is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or treatment and should not be interpreted as such. Always seek advice from a qualified medical professional and use of this information is at your own risk*

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