



Job Ready Services

Job Ready Services, LLC



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Prevention of “Blackberry Thumb” and Other MSDs at Work

Did you know that the US Department of Labor considers keyboarding for more than 4 hours per day, “physically demanding work”? The latest malady to hit American workers is “Blackberry Thumb” - those who use their PDA’s and Blackberries to check and compose email, often beyond the 8 hours they put in at the office. According to Margot Miller, a Physical Therapist with WorkWell Systems, those who use PDA’s for more than short intervals, several times a day — are more likely to develop symptoms ranging from swelling and hand throbbing to tendonitis. Additionally, because so many PDA users are middle-aged businesspeople, overuse can aggravate underlying arthritis, she says. “Because the keyboard of a PDA is so small and because the thumb, which is the least dexterous part of the hand, is over-taxed (for faster typing), the risk of injury skyrockets.”

It is no wonder that MSDs (musculoskeletal disorders) comprise about one-third of workplace injuries, according to the 2003 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. There are strategies to prevent “Blackberry Thumb” as well as other painful disorders of the back, neck, and shoulders, often either caused or exacerbated by work.

Taking “micro-breaks” to stretch or change position will help alleviate pain and possible damage. Learning proper stretching techniques & strengthening exercises will also help. Be more aware of your body’s position in your workspace and enlist your co-workers to help you with this. Supervisors and Managers need to regularly train employees to be aware of risk factors, body signals and proper techniques to prevent problems. Also, equipment (chairs, tools, etc) need to be in good condition and employees need to know how to adjust equipment to best fit their body and work required.



If you are in a position for a prolonged period of time, stretch in the opposite position to allow your muscles to recover. The exercise at right is good after sitting at a desk for a period of time. Avoid poor posture (above).

Important points to remember in preventing MSDs at work:

- Static postures cause decreased blood flow which can increase potential for cumulative trauma conditions. Use micro-breaks to move and stretch frequently.
- If you are in a certain position for a prolonged period of time, stretch in the opposite position to allow your muscles to recover. Example: after sitting, stand and bend backwards for a few seconds (see above)
- Consider having a PT or OT come to your workplace to provide instruction on proper stretching, strengthening and workstation set up to empower employees with the knowledge to prevent MSDs.
- Encourage early reporting of any musculoskeletal complaints to prevent a bigger problem later (such as an injury or worker’s comp claim).
- Sending an employee to a PT or OT for a one time evaluation and instruction in first aid treatment which includes exercise instruction is not a recordable on OSHA logs.
- Make sure you know how to adjust all of the equipment you use daily—your chair, desk height, tools (e.g., do you need a headset to prevent neck strain or a foot rest to reduce back strain?)
- Be aware of your body in your workspace—is your posture neutral? Are your hands and arms in neutral positions? Have your co-workers check your posture and your position. Offer to check them as well.
- Don’t assume all hand symptoms are due to carpal tunnel. Poor neck posture can cause the same symptoms and a simple exercise and workstation modification can eliminate the cause.

News and Upcoming Events

Job Ready’s Annual Seminar “Money Saving Practices to Maximize Employee Selection” was a huge success! If you missed it, but would like a copy of the presentations on a CD, please contact Michelle Morgan (contact info below). Cost for the CD is only \$10.00.

LUNCH & LEARN:
Thursday, May 1, 2008
12:00 pm-1:00pm
Topic: TBA (hand injuries)
Dr. Terry Messer
Approval pending: CRC/CCM

Need CEU’s?
We have several presentations pre-approved for adjusters (Dept of Insurance) and for Case Managers (CCM/CRC) - we can come to your office to present! Contact Michelle Morgan for more info.

Other Job Ready Services:

- Employment testing
- Ergonomic Assessments by a Certified Ergo Assessment Specialist
- Work conditioning
- Functional Capacity Evals
- Workplace training
- Fit for Duty Testing

Job Ready Services, LLC
919-256-1400
2300 Westinghouse Blvd
Suite 107
Raleigh, NC 27604
www.jobreadyservices.net

For more information on any of these events or services, please contact Michelle Morgan:
michelle.morgan@jobreadyservices.net