Technology-Related Repetitive Strain Injuries

The widespread use of technology and related devices has led to important user health concerns. For example, prolonged or improper computer and mobile device use can lead to injuries or disorders of the hands, wrists, and elbows. You should be proactive and minimize your chance of technology-related risk.

Repetitive Strain Injuries

A repetitive strain injury (RSI) is an injury or disorder of the muscles, nerves, tendons, ligaments, and joints. RSIs related to the use of technology include tendonitis and carpal tunnel syndrome.

* Tendonitis is inflammation of a tendon due to repeated motion or stress on that tendon.
* Carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) is inflammation of the nerve that connects the forearm to the palm of the wrist.

Repeated or forceful bending of the wrist can cause tendonitis of the wrist or CTS. Symptoms of tendonitis of the wrist include extreme pain that extends from the forearm to the hand, along with tingling in the fingers. Symptoms of CTS include burning pain when the nerve is compressed, along with numbness and tingling in the thumb and first two fingers.

Long-term computer work can lead to tendonitis or CTS. Factors that cause these disorders include prolonged typing sessions, prolonged mouse usage, or continual shifting between a mouse and keyboard. If untreated, it is possible for these disorders to lead to permanent physical damage.

Preventing Technology-Related Tendonitis or CTS

Follow these precautions to help prevent tendonitis or CTS related to technology use:

* Take frequent breaks to exercise your hands and arms.
* Do not rest your wrists on the edge of a desk. Instead, place a wrist rest between the edge of your desk and the keyboard.
* Place the mouse at least six inches from the edge of the desk. In this position, your wrist is flat on the desk.
* Minimize the frequency with which you switch between using the mouse and the keyboard.
* Keep your forearms and wrists level so that your wrists do not bend.
* Avoid using the heel of your hand as a pivot point while typing or using the mouse.
* Keep your shoulders, arms, hands, and wrists relaxed while you work.
* Be sure to maintain proper posture.
* Stop working if you experience fatigue or pain.
* Seek advice from a health professional if you notice the onset of symptoms of tendonitis or CTS.