

PAIN & INJURY GUIDE

Repetitive strain injury (RSI): your 5-minute routine



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Gentle wrist and forearm movements and breaks, to help keep the forearms and hands moving if your work or hobby is repetitive.

How often: A few short rounds through the working day if you can.

Total time: about 5 minutes. **You will need:** a table.

Before you start

- This is general information based on NHS physiotherapy leaflets. It is not a personal treatment plan. If a doctor, physiotherapist or osteopath has given you different advice, follow that.
- Move slowly and smoothly. Mild discomfort or a stretching feeling is fine. Sharp pain is not.
- The pain should settle back to your usual level within an hour or two. If it is worse the next day, do fewer repeats or a smaller movement, or leave that exercise out for a few days.

Your routine

1

Wrist bend and stretch

about 1 min

Rest your forearm on a table with your hand over the edge.
Slowly bend the wrist down and up, as far as is comfortable.

How much: Hold 5 seconds at each end, 5 to 10 repeats

2

Wrist side to side

about 1 min

Rest your hand flat on a table, palm down.
Slowly bend the wrist towards your thumb, then towards your little finger.

How much: Hold 5 seconds at each end, 5 to 10 repeats

3

Forearm stretch (palm side)

about 1 min

Hold your arm out in front with the elbow straight and your fingers pointing up.
Use your other hand to gently draw the fingers back until you feel a stretch on the inside of the forearm.

How much: Hold 20 seconds, 3 times

4

Forearm stretch (back of forearm)

about 1 min

Hold your arm out in front with the elbow straight and palm down.
Use your other hand to bend the wrist down, gently, until you feel a stretch on the top of the forearm.

How much: Hold 10 to 15 seconds, 3 times

5

Stand up and move

about 1 min

Get up, walk around or stretch for a minute or two. Do this regularly through the day, especially after long spells of sitting.

How much: A minute or two, regularly through the day

Good to know

- Taking regular breaks and changing task is part of the plan, not an add-on.
- Move slowly and within a comfortable range. A tight or pulling feeling is normal.

Easier, or harder?

- Too sore? Do fewer repeats, make the movement smaller, or miss that exercise out for a few days.
- Feeling good? Only add a few repeats, or a second set, when the routine feels easy and comfortable. There is no rush.

Keep track

Tick a box each day you do your routine.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							

Get urgent help first, and do not exercise, if you have any of these

Go to A&E or call 999 if you have any of these. They can be signs of a fracture, infection, blood clot or other emergency.

- A limb that looks deformed, or a joint that you cannot move or put weight on after an injury
- A cold, pale or numb foot or hand after injury
- A hot, red, swollen joint with a high temperature
- A painful, swollen, warm calf, with or without breathlessness or chest pain

See your GP promptly, or call NHS 111, if

- Pain after a significant injury, fall or twist
- Pain that is constant, severe or getting worse, or wakes you at night
- Unexplained weight loss, fever or feeling generally unwell with limb pain

Stop these exercises if

- If you feel sharp pain, ease off or stop for a couple of days until it settles.
- If you are not improving after about 4 weeks, or things are getting worse sooner, get it checked. A GP, physiotherapist or osteopath can assess what is going on and adjust your exercises.

Want your problem assessed?

If you would like your symptoms assessed, you are welcome to book an appointment with Lance Peterson Osteopathy in Chichester: lancepetersonosteopathy.co.uk/book.html · 07899 358698. Osteopathic care is not right for everyone, and if something needs medical attention first, you will be told.

The full plain-English guide, with the common questions and sources, is at:
lancepetersonosteopathy.co.uk/guide/rsi-repetitive-strain-injury.html

Based on

The exercises are described in my own words from these NHS and Chartered Society of Physiotherapy resources. Repeats and holds are kept to the gentle, beginner end of the ranges they give. Links were checked in October 2026.

- Cambridge University Hospitals NHS: Hand therapy, active wrist exercises
<https://www.cuh.nhs.uk/patient-information/hand-therapy-active-wrist-exercises/>
- Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS: Golfer's elbow
<https://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk/patients-and-visiting/patient-information-leaflets/musculoskeletal-msk/golfers-elbow/>
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy: Video exercises for elbow pain
<https://www.csp.org.uk/conditions/elbow-pain/video-exercises-elbow-pain>
- NHS: Physical activity guidelines for adults aged 19 to 64
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/>