

Hand Therapy for Repetitive Strain Injuries

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is a general term used to describe painful conditions felt in one's muscles, nerves, tendons and other soft tissues.

RSIs in the hand are often caused by overuse, such as repetitive motions, forceful exertions, or sustained awkward positions. This overuse causes increased stress and fatigue in different tendons, joints or muscles.

Without proper treatment and rest, the affected hand may become stressed and fatigued. This can lead to severe inflammation, which may cause symptoms such as numbness, stiffness, weakness and pain.

With correct treatment, RSIs in the hand can resolve or be self-managed over time.

How is it treated?

Occupational Therapists are the primary healthcare professionals to manage patients with RSIs in the upper limb. Treatment involves education of the patient on the condition and application of self-management strategies in daily activities.

There is often close collaboration between the therapists and clinical team at the [Hand and Reconstructive Microsurgery Centre \(HRM\)](#). When necessary, the clinical team complements therapy by providing treatments such as corticosteroid injections. In more severe cases, the clinical team may suggest surgery as a treatment option.

What does rehabilitation involve?

The main aim of the treatment is to rest the affected hand or tissue and give adequate time for the inflammation to subside.

Occupational Therapists will fabricate/prescribe a splint or support to restrict certain movements of the affected hand. Advice on activity modifications are provided to ensure the patient can continue with his or her daily routine, without affecting the recovery of the injury.

Doctors will make a referral to the Occupational Therapist at the first clinic visit. Assessments are administered to determine the severity of the RSI, and to understand its impact on patients' daily activities. The therapist then intervenes with patient-specific advice and suggestions of activity modifications. Patients will be scheduled to return for further appointments to chart their improvement and progress in their therapy treatment goals.