

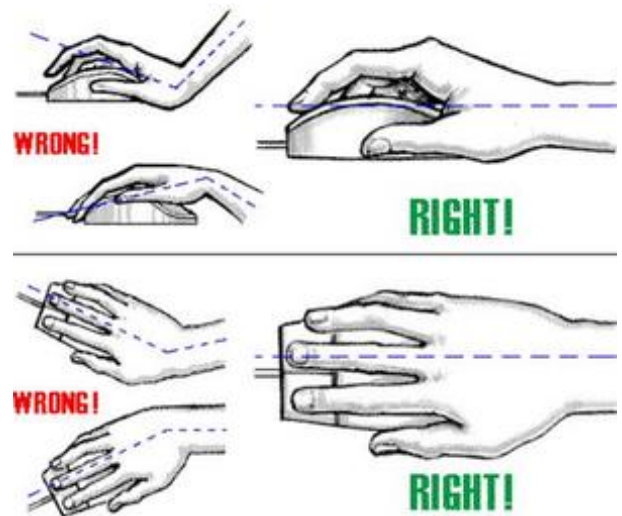
## Mouse-Related Pain

Musculoskeletal injuries from using a computer mouse are common. This is because we use the mouse for most computer software and often put the mouse in a poor location or do not use it properly. The typical mouse-related injury occurs when we are over reaching for the mouse or when the space to move the mouse is too small.

### Some Signs of a Mouse-Related Injury?

- Pain in the back of the fingers and hand. Pain may involve burning, soreness, shooting pain, numbness and tingling or discomfort.
- Pain on the pinkie or thumb side of the hand. The pain may occur at the right or left side of the wrist or up to the forearm.
- Numbness and tingling in the palm and wrist. This may be the start of Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.
- Pain around the wrist. Sometimes it feels like a “bracelet of pain”.
- Pain on the outside of the elbow and forearm muscles. This is a muscle/tendon injury and is sometimes called “Tennis Elbow”.

- Muscle tightness at the top of the shoulder and close to the neck. The pain may also occur between the shoulder blades.



### Why Using a Mouse Can Cause Pain?

You can develop pain 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. Bending the wrist in any direction increases pressure within the hand. Using the mouse just above or below the height of the keyboard or with the elbow ‘winging’ out away from the body increases strain on the joints of the wrist, elbow and shoulder. These reaches also uses the muscles of the back, shoulders and arms to hold your arm out. Eventually these muscles can get tired and sore.

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.

**Learning to use the mouse with the *Left Hand* will help reduce strain by resting the right.**

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## 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. 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.
- **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 place 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.

- Learn to use the mouse in the **opposite hand** to help reduce strain.
- Take **frequent short breaks and stretch** often.
- Learn **alternative keyboard commands.** Short-cut keys can reduce mouse gripping and clicking.

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## The Employer's Responsibility

The Workplace Safety and Health Act requires that the employer ensure the safety, health, and welfare of all the workers in a way that is reasonably practical. The Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Regulation: Part 8 states that a risk assessment must be conducted when a risk of injury is brought to the attention of the employer. This should be done in cooperation with the health and safety committee or worker representative. Employers can:

- provide a proper sized mouse for the workers hands
- provide alternative input devices such as a 90° vertical mouse or touch pad
- schedule additional rest breaks for workers to relax tire muscles working long hours
- regularly review office ergonomic set ups and practices
- provide MSI prevention training and education
- review office workstations when a worker returns from an injury or long absence

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### *For more information*

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