OUR GUIDE TO MOUSE ARM

Gain insight into

Everything you need to know – from symptoms and causes to treatment and prevention

contour

A staggering amount of people either suffer from mouse arms or will experience it sometime in their life.

Research shows that approximately 35% of everyone, who's job consists of sitting in front of the computer, will at some point experience one or more facets of mouse arm.

This guide will help those who have a mouse arm ailment or those who wish to prevent it. We will give you the knowledge needed to find possible solutions and nip them early on.

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What symptoms to watch out for?

What is a “mouse arm”?

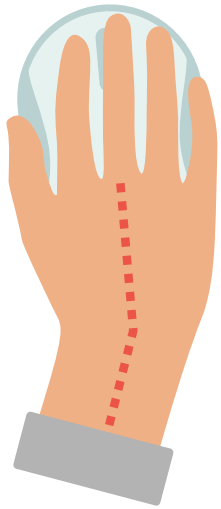
Mouse arm is a repetitive strain injury (RSI). If you feel pains in your shoulder, forearm, hand, or wrists when working at your computer, you probably suffer from a mouse arm. The common denominator for mouse arm – a term covering different ailments – is that the pains typically appear when working in front of a computer using a traditional mouse or keyboard. Usually, you can sense the pain in the areas mentioned above.

“Mouse arm” is a term coined by the public, as it is easier to use than carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS) or De Quervains tenosynovitis. Two of the many sufferings mouse arm refers to. Besides, the mouse arm is easy to connect to one of the computer mouse’s key triggers. More on that later.

Both CTS and De Quervains syndrome are ailments often caused by strains and congestion, why these are by far the most active trigger for mouse arms.

Often it is followed by inflammation in either muscles or tendons, where the tissue becomes irritated, causing it to swell and become sore. However, the mouse arm can also come from a pinched nerve or a severe case of myositis. These are local muscle pains that are not considered an actual injury but where the muscles have contracted.

Source: Bauerfiend.com.au



Mouse arm symptoms

1. Pain in shoulder, forearm, wrists, and/or hand
2. Pain that is worsened through repetitive or static work
3. Burning sensation in the shoulder
4. Soreness in hand and arm
5. Stiffness in shoulder-, elbow-, and hand joints.
6. Pain in shoulder-, elbow-, and hand joints.
7. Reduced grip and movement
8. Swelling of hand and grip
9. Soreness when touched around forearms and hand

Source: Movebeyond.com.au

The most common ailments linked with mouse arm:

Carpal tunnel syndrome

A painful state for hands and fingers. It occurs if there is not enough space for the medianus-nerve. People who are especially prone to CTS work with repetitive hand motions over a more extended period. Typical symptoms are tingling, burning, and sleeping sensation that can be combined with reduced sensitivity. It often becomes worse at night or when the arm is held still.

Cubital tunnel syndrome

It occurs when there is pressure on the ulnar nerve in the elbow or wrists. The root cause often stems from vibration tools employing frequent, quick, and repetitive motions in awkward working positions. The most natural symptoms are a tingling sensation in your ring finger, little finger, and hand below these two fingers. Additionally, it can cause quite severe pains in the forearm and elbow.

De Quervains syndrome

One of the most common tenosynovitis strains is located in the wrist. Tenosynovitis is a painful irritation in the tendons on the backside of the thumb, which is often caused by stress in the wrist.

Dupuytrens contracture

An ailment that affects hands and fingers, making it impossible to stretch your fingers fully. The hand starts to curl up into a fist as you age.

Epikondylit – also known as tennis elbow

Tennis elbow is an overload injury that can happen through work, leisure, or sports activities, where repetitive stress occurs. The ailment causes a lot of pain, mainly around the outside of the elbow.

Typical root causes

How does the mouse arm appear?

For most people, a mouse arm is an ailment that happens with static computer work.

Computer-related causes for mouse arm

1. Long hours working in front of a computer with a traditional mouse
2. Repetitive computer work
3. Precision work using a conventional mouse
4. Not resting your elbows on the desk when working
5. Too small or the wrong mouse
6. Using too much force when clicking or typing

A mouse arm often appears when working in front of a computer because it is not a natural position. Additionally, you tend to sit in it for many hours in a row. The many repetitive motions – such as clicking or typing – strains both muscles and tendons. Doing this for longer allows for high amounts of stress to nerves and tissue, why damage to these typically follows. As such, it is essential to be careful and change your habits and working positions.

Everything is not the computers' fault

Other sinners can cause mouse arms too. Have you just started tennis or kayaking? Unfamiliar and repetitive motions can cause mouse arms, why a racket or paddle can be a suspect.

Other causes of mouse arm

1. Strains related to sports – e.g., tennis or kayak
2. Strains related to lifting – repetitive, heavy lifts
3. Breastfeeding, as you hold your child in a manner not fit for your body's needs
4. Being overweight
5. Lack of exercise and training

Source: Museskade.dk

Does mouse arm figure as a work-related injury?

Back in the day, mouse arm was not recognized as an injury for which you could claim compensation. Today, more and more mouse arm-related ailments – as carpal tunnel syndrome - are considered claim worthy. As such, you should consult with a claims counselor if you experience any pains related to the mouse arm.

What do you need to claim compensation for CTS?

1. To confirm your eligibility for compensation, you must ensure that:
   - You were owed a duty of care by the defendant (legally, that will always be the case in employer/employee relationships).
   - Negligence by your employer meant they breached their duty of care.
   - Due to the negligence, you have been diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome.
2. To back your claim, you need:
   - Copies of correspondence. If you told your employer you were worried that your working conditions were affecting you, print out any emails or documents relating to that correspondence.
   - Occupational health reports. If a specialist reviewed your working environment, their report could be used as evidence.
   - If you still work for your employer, pictures of any equipment you use or your workplace setup could help you.
   - Medical reports. Your condition must be assessed by a professional.
   - Incident reports. Where you have reported your injuries to your employer, they should document them.
   - It is a good idea to keep a record of how carpal tunnel has have affected you

Source: Accidentclaimadvice.org.uk

Compensation

To claim compensation, the injury must be recognized as a work injury. To do so, the injury must have happened while you were working for an employer situated in the UK. Additionally, the injury has to have occurred while working.

Source: Accidentclaimadvice.org.uk

Treating mouse arm

How do you treat mouse arm related injuris?

Since mouse arm is often connected to computer work and poor ergonomics such as faulty installed equipment, it is good to consult with an expert in ergonomics when treating it. This could be an ergotherapist or someone with qualified knowledge of ergonomic setups in the workplace.

The first step in treating the mouse arm is eliminating the cause. Work to get rid of bad habits, change your mouse with an ergonomic mouse, and do exercises (see below)

Actions against mouse arms

The most crucial action you can take to get rid of the mouse arm is to set up your workstation correctly.

You should have a look at the following areas:

1. Desk
2. Chair
3. Screen
4. Keyboard
5. Mouse
6. Possibility for variation and movement

Desk

If your desk is not set to fit your height, it can result in inappropriate working positions that lead to mouse arms or other injuries.

You should always have a height-adjustable desk that fits you perfectly. It needs the proper depth so that you may set your screen according to the appropriate guidelines (see "Screen section" below). Additionally, it must be broad enough that have room to work and that you may rest your forearms on it, allowing you not to tense up.

Chair

It must be possible to adjust your chair so it matches your height. It is essential to set your seating height before you start fixing the desk. The height of the desk is dependant on the chair.
When seated, you should be allowed to sit with your feet flat on the floor. You must sit as far back as two-thirds of your thighs have support, while the back must support your lower back.
Read more about office chairs and find one to fit your needs here.

Screen

Your screen should be placed at arm's length, which is approximately 25 inches. Your eyes must be aligned with the top edge of the screen, allowing you to have a slight downward gaze. If you have multiple screens, place them in a v-shape.

Ergonomical computer gear

For most, the keyboard, mouse, and screen will be the most critical equipment when doing computer work. What goes for all three is that it should support a proper working position and fit your individual needs.

Try an ergonomically designed keyboard for two weeks

Keyboard

Your keyboard must allow you to keep your wrists in natural positions avoiding tedious angles. A negative inclination, where the keyboards tip away from you, is excellent. Bended wrists are more natural and relaxed.'

Additionally, the keyboard should be placed at the desk so that you can rest your hands and forearms. Think about incorporating as many shortcuts as possible to reduce your total keyboard stroke number.

Computer mouse

When it comes to your mouse, it should make it possible for you to work in natural positions that do not strain your body and force you into inappropriate working positions.

From an ergonomic perspective, the most optimal mouse is a centered mouse placed in front of your torso in the middle of your hands.
With a centered mouse, you have your arms placed in a natural, relaxed position in front of your body rather than placed on the side. This removes tension on your shoulder, arm, and elbow. Since this stress can often cause pain, releasing the side tension could eliminate the mouse arm.

99% of users believe that an ergonomic, centered mouse removes pains and discomfort. *

When talking about ergonomics, the needs can be very different between individuals. There is the no-size-fits-all solution. Therefore, the centered mouse is not the right choice for everyone.

A one-hand mouse can be the best fit for you. If so, it is equally vital that you select a model that supports computer work without providing strains and stress and with no unnatural angles. The most important functions will be:

1 Possibility to adjust the angle

If you rest your hand on the desk, your hand will never be flat on the table. It will rest on the edge of the "pinky" side. That means your mouse should be adjustable to meet that natural position, so it lies more vertically on the desk.

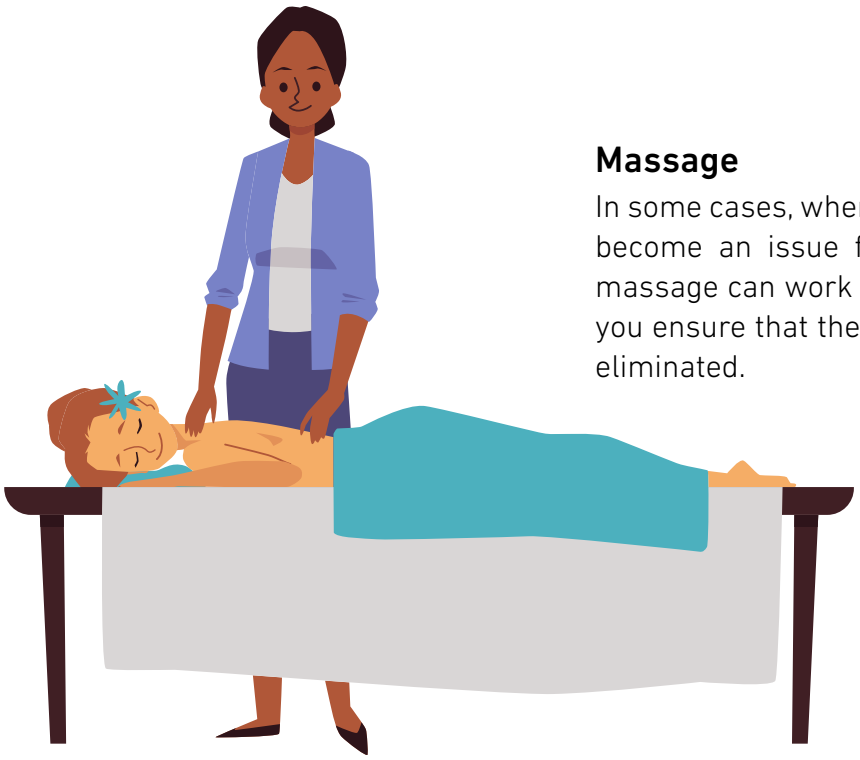
2 Thumb support

Thumb support is critical, as it removes the pressure on the thumb's tendons. As such, it reduces the stress on your hand, and you can work for a more extended period. The support must be adjustable in all directions. Up and down. In and out. Forward and back. This makes it possible to fit individual needs.

Try an ergonomically designed mouse for two weeks

Possibility for variation and movement

The key trigger for superb ergonomics in the workplace is variation. A solid rule is that you must change position or get up and move around every 45 minutes. Get up, have a meeting on the go, get a cup of coffee, or simply walk around the building.



Massage

In some cases, when mouse arms have become an issue forced by myositis, massage can work as a pain reliever if you ensure that the triggering cause is eliminated.

Download our checklist for proper ergonomic workplace setup

Ergonomics is also crucial in the home office. Find everything you need to know **here**.

Prevention is the best defence

How do you prevent mouse arm?

On those occasions, where mouse arm is caused by computer work, it is prevented similarly as it is treated – by getting your workplace ergonomics right.

If you have not read it yet, go back to the previous chapter and make sure you have your desk, table, chair, keyboard, mouse, and habits locked down.

Exercises

Exercising is generally an excellent idea if you want to avoid any painful surprises. When you work your muscles, your body is building to handle the tasks you ask of it - for instance, working ergonomically in front of the computer rather than slumping down over the desk, being seated all day.

If you are prone to dealing with a mouse arm, when you are in front of the computer at work, there is a series of different exercises that you can do at or close to your desk.

Shoulder exercise:

1. Tie the middle of a fitness elastic to a door knop and face the door handle.
2. Grab the end of the elastic with each hand and pull it back without bending the wrist.
3. Let your arms slowly return to the starting point and repeat.

See the instructional video here >>

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Exercises for shoulders and back:

1. Place yourself with slightly spread legs, back straight, and the end of a fitness elastics in each hand.
2. Keep your thumbs pointing up and elbows slightly bent
3. Stretch your arms over your head
4. Pull your hands away from each other and downwards, tightening the elastic

See the instructional video here >>

Exercises for forearms:

1. Place yourself on a chair at your desk
2. Put the elastics straightened out in front of you
3. Let your arms rest on the desk. Keep your palm on the right hand while turning the left palm down. Grab the elastics in each hand.
4. Cross your arms with the right arm on top, making them intersect at the wrists.
5. With the elastic, rotate your right hand away from the left, tightening the elastic.
6. Repeat the exercise with the opposite arm.

See the instructional video here >>

Contour Design is a market leader with the reach, development, and design of ergonomic computer mice and accessories such as RollerMouse, Unimouse, Contour Mouse, and Balance Keyboard.

Contour Design, Inc. was founded in 1995 by Steve Wang and is headquartered out of Windham, New Hampshire, in the US.

In Ballerup, Denmark lies the headquarter for Contour Design Nordic, which imports and markets its products via subsidiaries in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the United Kingdom. Contour Design Nordic is involved in partnerships with distributors of ergonomic equipment in Germany, France, Holland, Austria, and Switzerland.

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