

- family medicine
- chiropractic/active release technique
- nutrition consulting
- physiotherapy
- acupuncture
- registered massage therapy
- laser hair removal
- orthotics

## the hazards of mouse arm

by Suzanne Helfenstein,  
Physiotherapist

The rapidly developing tech world has created a new generation of musculo-skeletal injuries. In this, my inaugural article, I hope to give you some insight into the nasty aches and pains associated with using a computer mouse. I can't tell you how many times I have treated people with pain or discomfort in their right shoulder and neck, elbow, forearm, wrist, thumb or index finger, and they "don't know why." My first question always is...."is your mouse up on your desk?"

There are 2 ways that people use the computer mouse. Some individuals sit back comfortably in their office chair and rest the weight of their arm on the little finger side of their palm. The human arm is roughly 9% of your body weight. That is a lot of PSI (pounds per square inch) on such relatively tiny bones and ligaments. Not to mention that a nerve that services your 4th and 5th finger, and part of your thumb, passes under that area. With the advent of optical mice, we no longer use mouse pads, so now there is no padding either. This biomechanical faux pas typically results in wrist pain on the little finger side or pain in the index finger and/or the back of the hand.

The second habit employed for mousing, is the person that sits at the front of their chair, (completely forgoing the comfort of the chair backrest and adjustable armrests that they paid so much money for) keying away at high speeds, moving their right hand back and forth to the mouse up on their desk. Remember, the arm weighs approximately 9% of your body. Lifting it a few times is nothing, but lifting it hundreds of times or holding it in the air for long periods is

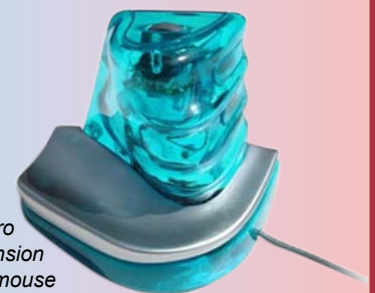
most likely to result in shoulder and neck pain, deltoid or bicep pain, elbow or forearm pain.

There is an overwhelming amount of information available on ergonomics, as the ergonomic industry is booming. Let's simplify it with a quick check list:

1. Support your arm to avoid the weight bearing through your wrist and repetitious elevation of your arm.
2. Be sure your back is resting against your back rest.
3. Invest in a foot rest (A plastic molded foot stool is as good as the sleek "ergonomic" foot rest that you see in office supply catalogues).
4. Rest your elbow on the armrest. If you are a small person, sitting in a wide chair, shimmy over to your mouse side, so that you can rest your arm on the armrest without leaning sideways.
5. Choose a mouse that suits you. The "neutral" or least stressful position for your forearm or wrist is actually when your hands face each other, as if you were clapping. Try and find a mouse that is slanted or angled to get your wrist and forearm towards that neutral position. For those of you who are really ergonomically conscious, you might look for a "joystick" style of mouse such as the Zero Tension Mouse sold at the Adelaide Health Clinic.

Please be nice to your arm.  
Support it and it will support you.

If you have any questions,  
or would like to book an  
appointment feel free  
to contact me at  
416-367-5200.



zero  
tension  
mouse



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# boost your motivation to change

by Mary Bamford, Registered Dietitian

Most people have mixed feelings about change. Take weight loss as an example. You may want the slimmer physique, increased energy and health improvements that weight loss provides. But have you reached the tipping point for change? Do you find that the advantages of losing weight exceed the costs of changing comfortable habits?

To build your motivation and confidence to change, ask yourself the following questions on your willingness, ability and readiness to change.

## 1. Are you Willing to Change?

What is your perceived importance of change? On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 is not at all motivated to change your eating and 10 is 100% motivated to change, what number would you give yourself at this moment?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

## 2. Are You Able to Change?

How confident are you that you can carry out change? If you were to decide to change your eating habits, how confident are you that you would succeed? If, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 means you are not at all confident and 10 means you are 100% confident that you could change for good, what number would you give yourself now?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

## 3. Are You Ready to Change?

What is your relative priority of changing right now? If you were to decide to change your eating habits starting now, how confident are you that you would succeed? If, on a scale of 1 to 10, 1 means you are not at all confident and 10 means you are 100% confident that you could start now, what number would you give yourself now?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

If you scored 7 or higher on all of these questions, then the answer is yes. If you scored less than 7 on any of them, here are some useful questions to ask yourself to build your motivation and confidence:

- Why am I at (chosen number) and not a 1?
- What would need to happen for me to get from (chosen number) to a higher number.
- What do I like about my eating habits? What do I dislike about my diet or health? Where does that leave me now?
- What up-to-date information, skills or services might help me in my decision about dietary change?
- Brainstorm change strategies could work. What are past successes I or others have had? What are the best options for me now?

If you want to trigger or speed up change in your eating or nutritional health, book a free 15 minute consult to ask how I can help you.



*Adapted from Miller WR, Rollnick S. Motivational Interviewing: Preparing People for Change. New York: The Guildford Press, 2002. It is an evidence-based approach to increase intrinsic motivation and success for lifestyle behaviour change including weight loss, increasing physical activity, alcohol abuse, drug addiction and smoking cessation.*



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