

Muscling out pain

Muscle injuries are more common than you think it is. Find out how to deal with it

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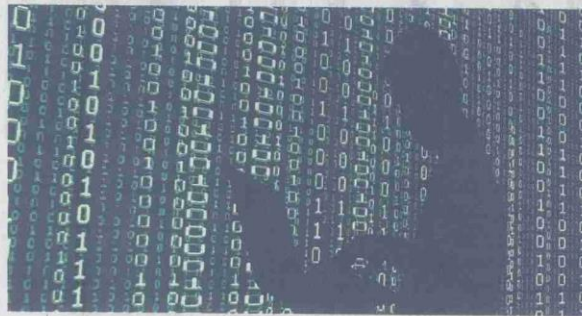
** Mrs S (56) yanked an over-stuffed strolley from the conveyor belt at the airport. It was one of the heaviest loads that she had lifted. She was pleased that she had succeeded but ended up with with an excruciating shoulder pain that continued for days.*

** Tara, a computer professional lifted up her laptop one day like she had always done with one hand. This time around her thumb got stretched more than usual and just froze.*

Muscle injuries such as these are not uncommon in this day and age. According to Dr. Brajesh Koshle, Senior Consultant Orthopaedics, Specialist in Arthroscopy and Joint Replacement Surgeon, Fortis Hospital, Noida "A muscle injury is caused by twisting or pulling a muscle or tendon. Strains can happen suddenly or develop over days or weeks. Elaborating further Dr Kannan Pugazhendi, Sports Physician, says "The muscle may be injured by a sudden, unexpected force that demanded a muscle or a few muscles to contract or stretch beyond its/their physiological capacity. This would result in a few muscle fibres or a whole muscle being disrupted, usually referred to as muscle strain. The other variety of muscle injury is a chronic one caused by a persistent loading of the muscle, sometimes even for many years, before it manifests as a discomfort."

It also may happen due to a combination of the two factors. For example an individual continuing to play sport ignoring a chronic condition which was considered not-so-serious can worsen the condition.

Are muscle injuries seen more often in certain age groups or professionals? Says Dr Pugazhendi ". Muscle injuries affect all age groups may be with a slight predilec-



WHEN MACHINES ARE A PAIN They make our lives easy at a cost PHOTO: REUTERS

tion for women, specifically in the age groups 30 to 45 years. Those using the computer, laptops, and cell phones are more pre-disposed to injury."

According to Dr Koshle, "Muscles which are commonly injured are the back, the hamstring muscle in the back of the thigh and the adductors of hip and quadriceps muscles. Sports such as soccer, football, hockey, boxing, and wrestling put people at risk for strains in the back or legs."

Thankfully the body has an infinite capacity to heal. However the extent of the injury, (it goes without saying that mild strains can heal on their own) the age group, and the prior exposure to fitness and exercise has a bearing on recovery. While treatment may be spread over several days and weeks, immediate first aid is very helpful "Immediate first aid consists of ice packing for 15 to 29 minutes irrespective of the cate-

gory. It would reduce the bleeding in the acute cases and reduce the pain and swelling in both the categories," adds Dr Kannan Pugazhendi.

Finally the bottom-line - what can be done to prevent muscle injuries?

"It is easier to prevent the acute muscle injures in a sports setting where warm-up and preparation for the game and gradual progression of the intensity of the training can be controlled. It is difficult to prevent the chronic ones as they happen with an insidious onset, and activities of daily living and professional demands like computer work etc. are unavoidable and are not even considered as a cause. The human body is not designed for the constant seated posture for long hours. It is essential to counter them with appropriate stretching and strengthening exercises," points out Dr. Kannan Pugazhendi.

Dr. Koshle says, ". Flexibility is also critical in preventing injury and re-injury of an already strained muscle. You can increase flexibility with stretching exercises. Proper posture at workplace and during household activities is also very important Preventing falls and proper level of vitamin D3 can reduce chances of muscle injuries in the older population."

Muscle injuries affect all age groups with a predilection for women, in the age groups 30 to 45 years