Pinnacol Assurance wants you to know about:

FACTS ABOUT REPETITIVE MOTION INJURIES

If you use the same hand or arm movements over and over in your work or at home, you could be at risk for developing a repetitive motion injury (RMI). These injuries result when the tendons and nerves in the hand and arm become irritated and inflamed from excessive strain. Although RMIs are common among people who use computers or typewriters for prolonged periods, they also occur among workers who do a lot of filing, sorting, packing, or wrapping. Sports and hobbies such as gardening, tennis, or sewing can also cause RMIs.

If left untreated, some types of RMIs can cause permanent injury. Fortunately, RMIs can often be prevented. Learning how to “work smart” and recognize symptoms before they become serious can help you reduce your risk of developing repetitive motion problems.

WORK SMART
Constant repetition, awkward hand positions, and lack of rest can contribute to RMIs. Use these tips to prevent injury:

- Avoid repeating actions when possible.

- Try adjusting your work area so that you can keep your wrist straight while filing or performing other repetitive motions. A bent wrist increases stress on tendons.

- If you work while seated, position your chair high enough so that your elbows are even with, or slightly higher than, your hands while you work. You may have to use a footrest to keep your legs comfortably supported.

- Take a short break and gently stretch and shake out your hands once every hour.

- Pace yourself—although working at breakneck speed may get the job done faster in the short run, a repetitive motion injury could put you out of commission for weeks or longer.

- An RMI can also be caused by what you do off the job. Make changes in the way you do things outside of work as well.

SYMPTOMS
If your arms or wrists ache, your fingers fell numb at night or you have difficulty doing simple manual tasks, you may be suffering from an RMI. If you experience those symptoms, talk your manager and seek medical attention. The earlier you identify a repetitive motion problem, the more likely you will be able to prevent it from becoming a serious disability.