

# Repetitive Strain Injuries

Work-relevant upper limb disorders, such as RSI, are a leading cause of work-related ill health. They can impact on all forms of industry. The good news is that most work-related illness or injury can be avoided if staff and employers put health concerns at the top of their 'to do' lists.

**Don't let work become a pain, follow these top tips from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy:**



## Manual workers

- **Make good use of any equipment designed to help you with strenuous tasks**
- **Try splitting loads into manageable sizes, so that you can move them more easily. Minimise the distance you need to carry items by using handling aids, such as a trolley or lift if possible**
- **Avoid prolonged or repetitive tasks. If on a production line, ask your supervisor if job rotation is possible, for example, so that you work on a different side or position on the line and use different muscles**
- **Use both hands – pick one item with your left hand then one with your right**
- **Don't over stretch to perform a task – move closer**
- **Avoid adopting a stooped or flexed posture when working at a bench or table by adjusting its height so that it is level with your waist**
- **Make sure your clothes fit well so you can move freely and keep warm – cold muscles don't extend properly**
- **Check machinery regularly. If your equipment works well, it will save you from putting in extra physical effort or improvising technique**
- **Take more short breaks rather than one long one – use the time to stretch your arms and legs.**

The most important thing you can do to prevent work relevant musculoskeletal disorders is to maintain a good level of physical fitness. Aim to take 30 minutes of exercise outside work at least five days out of seven.

## Office workers

- **A change can be as good as a rest – vary your tasks, stand up to take a phone call, move around every 20 minutes or so**
- **Move your neck, arms and shoulders periodically while seated at your desk**
- **Sit facing straight ahead, feet flat on the floor (or on a sturdy footrest) and with legs uncrossed**
- **Adjust your chair and VDU to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes the same height as the top of the VDU**
- **Adjust the backrest of your chair so that you can lean back against it comfortably. Make sure your lower back is supported**
- **Place your mouse within easy reach and support your forearms on the desk. Keep your wrists in a relaxed, neutral position. Drive the mouse from your shoulder, not your wrist**
- **Don't wedge your phone between your ear and your shoulder. Use a lightweight headset if necessary**
- **Use a copyholder if you work from documents**
- **Make sure that at breaks you leave your desk and walk around. At lunchtime try to go out of the office for a walk. This will relax your muscles, stretch your joints and get fresh air into your lungs helping you to work better in the afternoon.**

