

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy advice on: Repetitive Strain Injuries

(WORK-RELATED UPPER LIMB DISORDERS)

RSI

Work-related upper limb disorders, also known 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 CSP:



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, try working from different stations in half-hour periods to allow you to 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.

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
- Make sure your eyes are level with the top of your VDU screen
- 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
- Consider investing in ergonomic equipment but check its suitability with a physiotherapist first. Correcting your posture and changing general work practices can be very beneficial.

