



# Musculoskeletal Disorders

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## *Managers/Supervisors' Guidelines*

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## ***Pushing and Pulling***

It is important that:

- Pushing and pulling is carried out using the body's own weight – ensure you lean forward when pushing and backwards when pulling.
- Your feet must have enough grip on the floor to be able to support the increased force exerted on them as you lean forwards or backwards.
- You avoid twisting and bending your back.
- Handling devices have adequate handles or hand grips so that you can use your hands to exert a force; handle height should be between the shoulder and the waist so that you can push/pull in a good, neutral posture.
- Handling devices are well-maintained, so the wheels are of an appropriate size to transport the load and they run smoothly.
- Floor surfaces are hard, even and clean.
- Distribute force, for example, by using the palm of the hand and not just one finger.

## ***Repetitive Strain Injury – The Facts***

If you're working for a company that doesn't take repetitive strain injuries as seriously as other workplace risks, these facts and figures will make you sit up (straight!) and take notice.

- It is estimated that 1.2 million people are suffering from musculoskeletal disorders (such as back pain and repetitive strain injuries) caused by their work. There are 9.9 million working days lost as a result of work-related musculoskeletal disorders.
- Between 2003-2005, there were about 22,000 new cases of work-related illnesses per year, with MSDs accounting for almost a third of them.
- A worker that types 40 words a minute presses 12,000 keys per hour or 96,000 keys per 8-hour day.
- Approximately 8 ounces of force is necessary to depress one key – that means almost 16 tons of force will be exerted by your digits during each day.
- During 2001 and 2002, about 448,000 people in Great Britain suffered from RSI either caused by or made worse by work. As a result, an estimated 4.7 million working days were lost.
- RSI is common amongst musicians, athletes and manual workers, but computer users are by far the biggest single group of sufferers, accounting for up to 40 per cent of all RSI-related conditions.

Every day, six people in the UK leave their jobs due to having a repetitive strain condition.

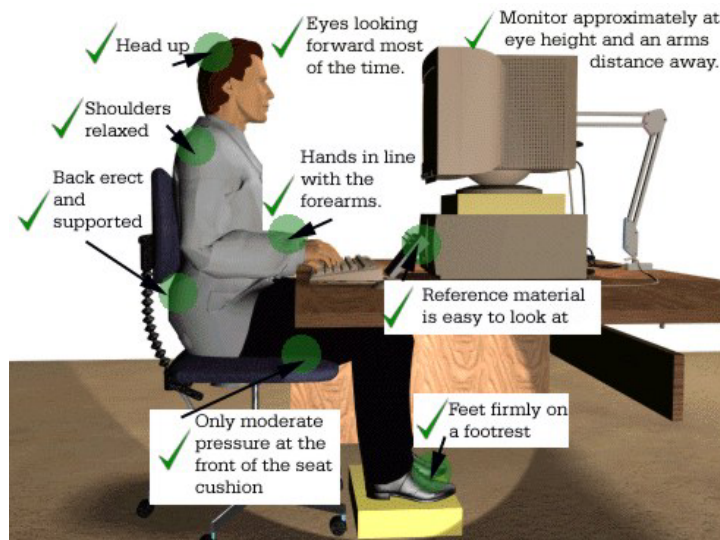
## ***Office checklist***

- Adjust the height of your chair so that when you put your fingers on the middle row of the keyboard your forearms and hands are horizontal, with your elbows vertically under your shoulders and no angle at the wrist.
- If the undersides of your thighs are squashed to your chair, you need either a footrest or a lower desk. There's no need to angle the footrest unless you wear high heels or position it a long way from your chair.
- Adjust the height of the monitor so the top of the screen is at eye level.
- Adjust the angle of the back rest, and/or the length of the seat. If the back of your knees is in contact with the front of the seat when you sit correctly, you need a different chair with a shorter seat length.
- Adjust the backrest height so that it supports the lower back. Sit very upright. If the shape of the backrest does not fit fully into the small of your back, you would probably benefit from adding a back support.
- Move your chair forwards so your elbows are vertically under your shoulders when you are typing.
- Do not place the monitor in a corner. Not only will it be difficult to get close to the keyboard, it will encourage you to twist, causing back and neck problems.
- Sit close to the desk and don't place anything between you and the keyboard (except a wrist rest if required).
- Position any additional equipment in easy-to-reach places.
- Adjust the temperature to suit your comfort.
- Use blinds or curtains to reduce bright light from windows.
- Ensure cables in a safe and secure position to avoid causing trip hazards.

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*\*For more information and illustrations please visit [www.openerg.com](http://www.openerg.com).*

## ***How to reduce workplace MSDs***

- Break up work periods involving a lot of repetition with several short breaks instead of having just one break at lunchtime or mid-shift. Make time for short, frequent pauses when carrying out intensive work. For high-risk tasks, ensure mechanical aids or equipment is available.
- Reduce the weight of items, or the distance moved. Alternatively slide them instead of lifting
- Share a high-risk task among a team by rotating workers between tasks.
- Keep workers with MSDs at work: Provide rehabilitation and reintegrate workers that suffer or have suffered from MSDs back into work.
- Before lifting a load, you need to plan and prepare for the task. Make sure that: you know where you are going; the area you travel through is clear of obstacles; you have a good grip on the load; your hands, the load and any handles are not slippery and if you are lifting with someone else, both of you know what you are doing before you start.
- You should use the following techniques when lifting a load: put your feet around the load, with your body over it (if this is not feasible, try to get your body as close as possible to the load); use the muscles of your legs when lifting; straighten your back; pull the load as close as possible to your body; lift and carry the load with straight downward turned arms.

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