

# Advice on the Health Effects of Working with Display Screens

## Upper Limb Discomfort (ULD) / Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs)

Sitting in fixed positions for long periods, awkward, rapid or repetitive movements of the head, body, or arms can cause pain or discomfort in the neck, shoulders or arms. These symptoms usually disappear when the work stops and are called acute symptoms.

If left unchecked or unreported poor workplace design or inappropriate keying technique may put some keyboard users at risk of chronic limb disorders. The warning signs of these disorders can occur in the hands, wrists, arms, shoulders, neck, or back, and can include:

- Numbness, burning, or tingling
- Soreness, aching, or tenderness
- Pain, throbbing, or swelling
- Tightness or stiffness
- Weakness or coldness

Symptoms may be felt during typing, while using a mouse, or at other times when no work with the hands is being performed, including during the night when these symptoms might awaken the person.

If the employee experiences these symptoms, or any other persistent or recurring pain or discomfort that you think may be related to using a computer, they should promptly consult their GP. The earlier a problem is properly diagnosed and treated, the less chance there is that it will progress to a disabling condition. To minimise the risk of this you can:

Ensure they adopt the correct posture at their workstation

- Ensure the user can take small informal breaks away from the screen
- Encourage stretching during breaks and if possible at their workstation to exercises the muscle and increases blood circulation, which relieves tension and reduces the risk of injuries.
- Where possible vary work so that use of DSE is broken up with other non-DSE based tasks.

ULD's / RSIs may have severe consequences if you do not act promptly, such as:

- Serious ill health
- Long term absence and disability
- Losing staff to injuries as a result of DSE

## Eye and Eyesight

Medical evidence currently suggests that using DSE is not associated with damage to eyes or eyesight, or with making any existing defects worse. Some users, however, may experience temporary visual fatigue leading to impaired visual performance, sore eyes and headaches.

Points to remember:

- Does the employee know how to adjust the brightness / contrast of the screen
- Are they sat at the correct viewing distance from the screen
- Is the screen clean and free from smears
- Is the screen free from reflection, glare or flicker
- Can they focus on different objects away from the screen to exercise the eye muscles
- Do they understand that the blink rate decreases when using a VDU for long periods this may cause the eyes to feel dry and gritty. Tell users to blink regularly
- Do they understand that bifocal or varifocal users may not be able to view the screen without having to move their head
- Laptop users require a shorter viewing distance and should inform the optician before having their eyes tested
- Do they understand the importance of an appropriate eye and eyesight test. Southampton City Council will meet the cost of the eye test. Normally it will be provided every two years but can be more frequent if the user is experiencing visual difficulties which may be due to display screen work.

If as a result of the test, you are required to purchase spectacles, solely for display screen use you are entitled to re-imburement by Southampton City Council. Please note, you must complete an [Eye Test Form](#) and get it signed by your line manager ahead of your appointment. You then need take the completed and signed form with you when you attend your eye test appointment.

## **Promoting Comfort**

The following list is designed to offer employees guidance on what they can do in their working environment to help themselves

### **Adjust**

- Adjust your body position and your work equipment.
- There is no one "right" position. Find your comfort zone, and when working at your computer, frequently adjust within this zone.

### **Move**

- Vary your tasks so that you can move around; avoid sitting in one posture all day.
- Perform tasks that require walking.

### **Relax**

- Build positive relationships at work and home. Relax and strive to reduce sources of stress.
- Stay aware of physical tension such as clenching your muscles and shrugging your shoulders. Continually release tension.
- Take frequent, short breaks.


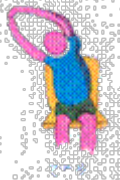

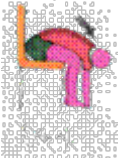


### **Listen**

- Listen to your body.
- Pay attention to any tension, discomfort, or pain you may feel, and take immediate action to relieve it.

### **Remember**

- Exercise regularly and maintain general fitness; this will help your body withstand the rigors of sedentary work.
- Respect any medical conditions you may have or other known health factors. Adjust your work habits to accommodate them.

**Note:** The exercises below are designed to help relieve tension and stiffness. You should always consult your doctor before exercising if you suffer from Heart Disease, Diabetes, or if you are receiving medical treatment.

<p><b>Stretch 1</b> Stretch your arms in front of you with palms facing out and fingers interlocked. Your hands should be at eye level and you should feel the stretch through the back and along your arms. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds breathing normally. Repeat Twice.</p>	
<p><b>Stretch 2</b> Keeping your arms above your head, place your right hand on the outside of your left hand and pull the left arm to one side. Ensure both arms are as straight and as comfortable as possible. You should feel the stretching side of the body in the shoulder and the arm. Repeat on the other side. Hold it for 15 seconds breathing normally.</p>	
<p><b>Stretch 3</b> Place both hands behind your head with fingers interlocked. Elbows should now be out to the side. Keep your head looking straight ahead and ensure you are upright. Begin to pull the shoulder blades together until tension is felt in the shoulder and upper back. Hold it for 8 – 10 seconds, breathing normally, then relax. Repeat several times.</p>	
<p><b>Stretch 4</b> Lean forward and place your head in between your knees and your hands on your toes. Hold the stretch for 45 – 50 seconds and breathe normally. Place hands on your thighs to help you get to an upright position.</p>	
<p><b>Stretch 5</b> Take hold of your lower right leg just below the knee and pull it gently towards your chest. Now using your right hand and arm gently pull your right leg towards your left shoulder until you feel a stretch on the side of your upper leg. Hold for 30 seconds and breathe normally. Repeat action with your left leg.</p>	
<p><b>Hands &amp; Fingers</b> Spread fingers wide apart and hold for 10 seconds, form fists for 10 seconds. Repeat several times.</p>	
<p><b>Eyes</b> Close your eyes tightly for a second then open them widely. Repeat several times Refocus your eyes momentarily on an object at least 20 feet away. Blinking, yawning and moving the eyes up and down, left and right is also beneficial.</p>	