

FITFORWORK



Stay healthy and happy at work with advice from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

THE OFFICE: AND LIFE'S TOUGH FOR ANITA...

...AND JACK



OH JACK,
MY NECK IS
IN AGONY!



AND I CAN'T
CONCENTRATE...
WHAT A DRAG!

Employment plays a big part in keeping you healthy – just going out to work is good for you, both physically and mentally.

Many people spend a large proportion of their time at work. It's common to feel too busy doing your job to take the time to consider how it impacts on your health.

Office workers particularly spend hours sitting still and carrying out repetitive tasks. The human body isn't designed for this; we're supposed to be moving around, so all this time spent at a desk needs to be well managed.

*This leaflet will show you how to incorporate enough physical activity into your day to help you **stay fit and healthy** for work, and how to avoid aches and pains in the office.*

RISK FACTORS FOR WORKPLACE ILL-HEALTH

- > Long periods of time spent in awkward or fixed postures
- > Repetition of movements
- > Heavy lifting, moving and handling
- > Suppressed feelings of pressure or frustration.

Common causes of sickness absence include musculoskeletal conditions such as lower back pain and 'work-relevant upper limb disorders' like Non Specific Arm Pain (NSAP). NSAP – often known as Repetitive Strain Injury – can cause discomfort in the arms, wrists, fingers, neck and shoulders. Other problems include feeling pressurised, anxious and low in mood.

These types of conditions are experienced by most adults from time to time. If identified early and managed well, they should not result in time off from work.



How to help yourself

- > Rotate your tasks. Alternate computer and telephone use or, even better, go to speak to someone face-to-face
- > Maintain good posture – don't slump and slouch
- > Try to get out of the office every day for some fresh air
- > Pay attention to what your body is telling you. Report any health problems to your employer as soon as possible.

Micro-breaks

Try to take a break for a few minutes at least hourly. Remember that lunch or tea breaks and the rotation of tasks also provide excellent opportunities to get away from your desk. It's a good idea to tell colleagues when you are going to be away, and you can remind them to take breaks too.

Remember! Don't skip meals; eat healthily and regularly to keep blood sugar levels stable and learn about foods that can boost concentration. Drink plenty of water.

DO SOME EASY EXERCISES EVERY HOUR OR SO

- > Holding a small bottle of water, sit down or stand with your feet hip-width apart and your back straight, slowly bend your arm at the elbow in a bicep curl. Keep your elbow close to your body. Repeat 10 times, then swap arms
- > Hold the bottle above your head with your arm straight. Slowly bend at the elbow to lower the bottle towards your shoulder, then straighten again. Repeat 10 times, then swap arms
- > Facing a wall and placing your hands on it for support, raise one leg straight out to the side and slowly lower it again. Repeat 10 times, then switch legs
- > When you're sitting down, march on the spot for a minute or two.

*Physiotherapists believe that when it comes to staying healthy at work, the emphasis should be on what you **can** do, not what you **can't** do.*

DO SOME SIMPLE STRETCHES

- > Sitting slightly forward in your chair, rotate your upper body to the right, to reach the right-hand side of the backrest with your left hand. Hold for five seconds, then swap sides
- > Loosely grasp your hands behind your neck. Push your elbows back and draw your shoulder blades together. Avoid pressing into the neck. Hold for five seconds
- > Interlock your fingers. Push your palms away from your body, gently stretching the forearm muscles, fingers and shoulder blades. Hold for five seconds
- > Reach over your head, bending to the side at your waist and then straighten up. Swap sides and repeat 10 times.

At your desk

Adjust the height of your chair and computer screen so your hips are slightly higher than your knees. Your forearms should be roughly horizontal when using your mouse and keyboard, and your eyes should be about level with the top of your screen.

Adjust the backrest of your chair so you can lean against it comfortably, with your lower back well supported and your feet flat on the floor or a footrest.

Place your mouse within easy reach and support your forearm lightly on the desk. Move the mouse from your shoulder, not your wrist.

If you spend long periods of time on the telephone, stand up to take every other call and preferably use a lightweight headset.

*There's no need to feel self-conscious when exercising at the office... Get your colleagues involved and **make it fun!** You're more likely to stick to activities you enjoy.*

SOON AT THE PHYSIO'S...

THE MUSCULAR SYSTEM

WE MUST WORK ON YOUR POSTURE, ANITA



Stay fit for work

Physical activity will improve your health and fitness, bringing many benefits to help you get the most from work and life. An active lifestyle can give you more energy and boost your mood, keeping you alert and productive in your job. Physiotherapists recommend that five times a week, all adults do 30 minutes of exercise that gets them slightly out of breath. If you don't have time for a 30 minute session, break it

up into three or four 10 minute chunks throughout the day.

Feeling stressed?

Support from your employer can help you manage stresses that may affect your ability to work. By raising concerns early, you can catch problems before they have a chance to build up.

Remember! Physical activity can help you prevent or manage stress.

HOW EMPLOYERS CAN HELP

All employers should be keen to support their workforce to stay healthy – it's in everyone's best interest to help keep staff happy, motivated and productive.

Employers also have certain responsibilities to their staff and should provide:

- Information and training about safe ways to work
- Workstation risk assessments conducted by trained assessors to minimise health risks
- Changes to workstations and work style where necessary
- Eye care for workers frequently using computer screens
- Encouragement for staff to take allocated breaks and to start and leave work on time.



Build some exercise into your working day

Physiotherapists can advise on building easy, effective exercise into your daily work routine. You don't have to divide your day into 'work time' and 'exercise time'. Instead, incorporate some physical activity into your time at the office.

Physiotherapy: keeping you fit for work

Recovery Physiotherapists are experts in rehabilitation, helping people return to their normal activities after illness and injury. If you're suffering from health problems that seem to be aggravated at work, physios can help! They will work with you to create a plan to help you get fit and healthy. This includes tackling risk factors in your job and

general lifestyle that may be causing or contributing to problems with your health.

Prevention Physiotherapists also know that prevention is always better than cure. Following the advice in this leaflet can help you reduce the risk of health problems occurring at all.

You can be referred to a physiotherapist by your GP, or you can contact your local NHS physio department. To find your local private physiotherapy practitioner visit www.physio2u.co.uk

To find an occupational health physio visit the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Occupational Health & Ergonomics website: www.acpohe.org.uk

This document can be made available in a format for people with sight problems
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in association with



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