

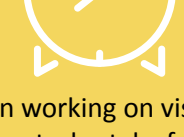
Strains, aches & pains


ALARM BELLS!


- Do you have frequent aches, pains or discomfort at work?
- Do you carry out manual tasks?
- Do you carry out tasks of short duration repeated many times per minute?
- Do you conduct similar tasks over a long time?
- Do you have to adopt awkward postures such as twisting or bending?
- Do you stay in the same position for long periods?


If any of these sound familiar, this guide gives you some easy-to-follow principles to help you feel more comfortable.

Check these tips for your head, neck and upper back


 When working on visually intensive tasks, take frequent breaks of around five minutes every 30 minutes to reduce eye strain and fixed postures.

 Position items closer to you so you don't have to twist or lean and you can keep your back straight. Move your feet rather than twisting your back. Active movement helps maintain circulation and nutrient flow to the discs in your spine.


 Turn your body and legs, perhaps by swivelling your chair to face the items you most frequently look at, so you're not twisting your neck or back.


 The average human head weighs 5kg. Looking down at your work can increase the pressure on your neck by up to 12 times. Try to raise what you're looking at or position yourself so you can view it with your head up and your neck straight.

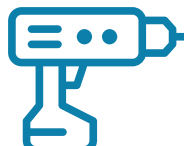
 Look out for draughts blowing around your head as they can cause you to tense your neck and shoulder muscles, which leads to stiffness.


 Bringing items closer to you or using sloped work surfaces or trays can help you keep your head up. Magnifiers could help where it's difficult to see small items. And make sure you have enough light to see everything clearly.

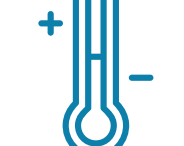
Find out how to keep your arms and shoulders fighting fit

 Did you know your grip strength decreases when your wrist is bent? Arrange your work to keep it straight and you'll reduce strain on your wrist and forearm.


 Activities that rotate your arm or use repetitive forceful motions can put strain on your elbow and forearm by twisting and stretching the tendons. Repetition work items or change the task or equipment to eliminate or reduce the amount of twisting force and repetition.


 Regular use of hand-held power tools and machines can transmit vibration to your hand and wrist and cause tingling and nerve damage. Reduce the time you spend on these tasks and try keeping your hands warm by wearing suitable gloves. Also, make sure it's the right tool for the job and is well-maintained.


 Watch out for your wrist resting against hard edges while you work as this can cut down the blood supply and make your hands ache or tingle.


 Make sure the room temperature and your clothing are appropriate to the task. You'll feel colder if you're less active. If your hands are cold, you'll need to grip harder which could strain your muscles. Cooler temperatures may make you hunch your shoulders, leading to aches and pains. Wear suitable clothing – and gloves if appropriate.


Learn how to keep your lower back, legs and feet in top condition

 Prolonged sitting or standing, particularly on a hard or unsupportive surface, can lead to aches in the buttocks or legs. Make sure you move around regularly as this helps ease discomfort.


 Whatever work you're doing, make sure you've got plenty of room around your legs so your posture isn't constrained.


 If you're using a seat, make sure it's got good lumbar support for your back. Make sure, too, that your feet are supported; if your feet don't comfortably reach the ground, use a footrest at the right height to take pressure off the back of your thighs.


 If you have to use a foot pedal to operate machinery, it can make your calves or ankles tired. Try to take regular breaks or relocate the pedal if possible to make your position more comfortable.


 Anti-fatigue mats can be useful if you have to stand on a concrete floor or in one place, such as at a workbench. But they can be a trip hazard or not be appropriate if you need to use trolleys, etc. Anti-fatigue insoles in your shoes may be a better option. And make sure your shoes are comfortable and supportive.


Overall tips for a healthier, more comfortable you

 Did you know that by strengthening and stretching your muscles, you may be able to prevent an injury from occurring? Early intervention is the key to avoiding long term injuries. So don't wait, if you have any aches, pains or discomfort, act now. Exercises are available at www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints#exercises

 If you can't make things better yourself with a few simple changes, tell someone. Your line manager or occupational health department should be able to help modify your activities, workstation and/or work environment. Tell your GP if the pain or discomfort is persistent.

 If you have strains, aches or pains, rest the affected muscles to allow the injury to heal itself. Stop carrying out the activity that's causing the trouble. Ask to be transferred to a different activity until the symptoms subside.

 Ask a colleague to help with tricky tasks to reduce the strain on you but make sure that you work out the best way of completing the job between you.

 Change your workflow so you can add variety to your tasks and position. If you can't do that, try to move once at least every hour. More movement means better blood flow which helps keep your muscles, bones and tendons healthier.

 Being stressed or anxious can cause you to tense your muscles, which can increase the risk of injury. Try to be conscious about whether you're feeling tense and see if there's something that can help improve how you feel.

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