How to prevent Repetition Strain Injuries

The risk of developing RSI-related complaints can be minimised by taking the following key "rules" into consideration:

* Set up your screen, keyboard and document holder correctly.
* Ensure your back, arms and feet are adequately supported by adjusting your chair and table correctly.
* Vary your tasks; alternate between working behind the computer and other tasks.
* Adopt a good working posture.
* Alternate between easy and difficult tasks.
* Take regular short breaks and briefly leave your work station; several short breaks are better than one long break.
* Regularly relax your limbs by doing an exercise. (see example elsewhere in this leaflet)
* Do not work more than 5 to 6 hours per day behind a computer. This also includes the hours you work with a computer at home.

Setting up the workstation

A well set up workstation is the first step towards preventing RSI symptoms. The necessary requirements are listed below:

Height of the sitting position

* Place your feet flat on the ground or on a foot rest.
* Make sure that your lower legs are vertical, so that the angle between the upper and lower leg is approximately 90 degrees.
* Ensure that the circulation to your upper legs and knees is not cut off; this will never happen with a 90 degree angle.

Back support

* The lower part of the back should be supported by the back of the chair.
* Adjust the height of the back of the chair accordingly.

The arm rests

* With your upper arms relaxed and hanging down and the lower arms in a horizontal position, your elbows should just touch the arm rests.
* The upper and lower arm should form a 90 degree angle. Relax your shoulders, avoid sitting behind the keyboard with hunched shoulders.

The work surface or desk

* The height of the arm rests of the chair should be the same as the height of the work table.
* If necessary adjust the height of the desk. If this is not possible adjust the height of the chair. Use a foot rest if you are not able to place your feet flat on the ground.
* If the work surface is too low, blocks or telescopic legs may be a solution, but make sure you have sufficient leg room.

Reading and writing activities

The area of the table used for reading and writing activities is at a good height if, with relaxed upper arms hanging downwards, the work surface is a few centimetres above elbow height.