

Repetitive Strain Injury Policy

Display Screen Equipment Policy

Health and Safety Legislation

These guidelines are based on recommendations in Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992. Please note that if you experience any specific issues such as back problems, pains in your wrists or arms or visual discomfort you should consult your GP.

The screen/monitor of your workstation has adjustable brightness and contrast controls to help you find a comfortable level and avoid problems with tired eyes and eyestrain.

You must plan your work to take breaks (suggested 5 minutes per hour), although these will also depend on how intensely or for how long you have been using the VDU. Always ensure that you maintain a good posture whilst working at your computer.

You should have eye tests regularly (at least once per two years).

How To Set Up Your Workstation

Step 1 Decide which tasks have priority

Consider all the tasks that you perform and decide which should be given priority when you organise your workplace.

Typical tasks include using a keyboard where you will want the keyboard at elbow height, close enough to allow your upper arms to hang down naturally and you want to be able to change position to avoid discomfort.

When operating equipment, it is important to be able to reach frequently used items without excessive twisting and stretching. Space to spread out working documents and plans is important, as is the ability to organise the workstation for different styles of working from inputting data to writing.

Step 2 Check that your workstation features are arranged to suit your tasks

With these tasks in mind, make sure everything is properly positioned and adjusted. If you find a problem, see if you can fix it yourself by making simple adjustments. If you are unable to fix a problem yourself, contact an appropriate person to assist you.

In many cases you will find that simple adjustments to equipment or furniture will be sufficient to ensure that your workplace suits you and your tasks. Do not be concerned if you have chosen to adjust or set out your workplace differently from your friends. Remember that everyone is different and what matters is that your workplace suits you and your own style of working.

Keyboard - Plan your desk so that you can do the tasks you do most often without twisting and stretching. If you use the keyboard a lot, sit directly in front of it, so that you are not twisting or stretching. If you spend more time working on documents, put them in front and the keyboard to the side.

Display Screen - Position the screen at a comfortable reading distance (approximately arms length away is comfortable for most users). Position the screen directly in front of you if you read it most of the time or to the side if you only refer to it occasionally. Make sure that you can do your main tasks without excessive twisting.

Chair - Now adjust your chair so that you are at the right height for typing; wrists reasonably straight, forearms approximately horizontal or sloping slightly downward and upper arms hanging down from comfortably relaxed shoulders. Then check that your feet are comfortably on the floor and that your legs are not hitting the underside of the desk. Some people may need a footrest to avoid their legs being unsupported and to prevent the underside of their thighs being squashed by the front of the chair.

Work surface - Make sure that the equipment, documents and other reference materials that you use are located so that you can reach frequently used items without excessive twisting, reaching or stretching. You may find that you prefer different arrangements depending on the type of task you are doing.

Lighting and Daylight - Adjust the position of your screen so that you are looking comfortably down at an angle of 15-30 degrees below the horizontal but without hunching your shoulders. A useful tip is that the top of the display casing should be approximately at eye level. You should be able to work at the screen without being distracted by glare or reflections. Here are some ideas for reducing the likelihood of problems with distracting glare and reflections - if possible, position the screen:

- At right angles to a window
- So that it does not back on to a window
- To avoid reflections from ceiling and wall mounted light fittings
- So that you can use the tilt and swivel movements of the VDU.

General Environment and Work Organisation - Even a good posture is tiring if you sit still for too long. Try to organise your tasks so that there is naturally some movement. If long spells in the same position are unavoidable, then deliberate exercises can help to avoid discomfort and fatigue. You should take short breaks from typing before you start to feel fatigue. The aim is to use breaks to avoid fatigue, not to recover from it.

Symptoms of Fatigue and Discomfort - Following the above guidance and setting up your workstation will help you to avoid some of the problems which are known to be associated with work which requires the same posture for prolonged periods, a degree of concentration and some repetitive movements. When introducing the new Health and Safety Regulations, which apply to users of Display Screen Equipment,

the Health & Safety Executive identified three main areas in which users' health could be affected:

- Upper limb pains and discomfort
- Eye and eyesight effects
- Fatigue and stress

If you are experiencing these types of health effects you should immediately contact your GP.