

Desk Ergonomics

Preventing Musculoskeletal Disorders

Do you know what the risks are when working at a desk for prolonged periods? Do you know how display screen equipment should be arranged so users can work without experiencing strain whilst at their workstation?



Monitor

- Directly in front of the user.
- Roughly an arm's length away.
- Eyes should be level with a point on the screen 2"-3" below the top.

Why?

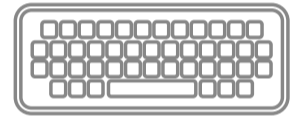
According to patient.co.uk, neck pain is one of the most common musculoskeletal complaints. About 2/3 of the population will experience neck pain at some point in their lives. Poorly positioned screens cause users to adopt straining neck positions.

Why?

Materials that cause light to reflect can cause glare and make people adopt awkward postures to avoid it. A lack of room for adjustment means people will retain static positions, leading to stiffness and fatigue in joints.

Work Surface

- Made of a low-reflectance material, e.g. wood.
- Enough room above and under the surface – user can adjust their legs and arms comfortably.
- Is a suitable height – user's elbows should be bent at or near a 90 degree angle when resting forearms on it.



Keyboards

- 'H' key in line with the centre of the user's body.
- Plenty of space in front of the keyboard to rest hands and forearms.
- Wrists and forearms kept straight and not need to stretch or bend.
- Arms bent at or near a 90 degree angle at the elbows.

Chairs

- User's feet flat on the floor.
- Knees bent at roughly 90 degrees.
- Footrest provided if needed.
- Lumbar support for the user's lower back.
- 1 inch between the user's legs and the sides of the chair.



Mouse

- Fits comfortably in the user's hand – fingers in a relaxed position.
- Supports the neutral position of the user's wrist.
- Placed near the keyboard and within easy reach.

Why?

Musculoskeletal disorders are the most common form of occupational ill-health in the UK (in 2014/15, they accounted for an est. 553,000 out of the 1.2 million work-related illnesses reported).

An inappropriate chair will lead to the user adopting poor posture and as a result strain being placed on the upper and lower back. This will lead to musculoskeletal disorders in the back and upper limbs.

Why?

Statistics from the Labour Force Survey suggest that there are over 200,000 cases of work-related upper limb disorders (ULD), including repetitive strain, every year in Great Britain.

Poorly positioned keyboards place strain on wrists and forearms, which will lead to repetitive strain disorders, e.g. carpal tunnel.

Why?

Having to overreach for the mouse or hold it too close to the body will lead to repetitive strain disorders.

Stretching and breaks

- DSE users should get up at least once an hour so to stretch and change their position.
- DSE users should carry out small exercises at or away from their desk to prevent prolonged strain.
- Users should take their designated breaks and break up long periods of DSE work with other tasks.

Why?

Regular stretching will relieve tension and strain, while breaks will give their body a chance to relax and recuperate after intense work periods.

