

RSI: The Basics

TUC guide to avoiding Repetitive Strain Injury

Repetitive Strain Injury is a major problem at work. However it does not just affect typists. Anyone who regularly uses a keyboard or mouse can be at risk. RSI is easily avoidable and these points below should help keep you safer.

1. The most important factor in workplace design is adjustability. We are all different shapes and sizes. Make sure that your workstation is set up properly. That means, as a minimum:
 - You should have enough space to work
 - The top of your screen should be at eye level and at a comfortable distance away from you.
 - Your forearms should be horizontal.
 - Make sure your employer provides you with an adjustable chair. Ideally you should find it comfortable to sit upright and have the seat tilted slightly forward.
 - Your feet should be flat on the floor, or a foot rest if you need one.
 - Wrist or palm rests should be provided and there should be space in front of the keyboard to support the hands during pauses in typing.
2. If you do a lot of typing then make sure your employer offers you touch-typing training. Two finger typists are far more likely to get pains in the hand wrist and forearms. An alternative is asking for a voice recognition software package.
3. Don't use the mouse too much. Always use a mouse mat. Consider using the controls on your computer to slow mouse movements down. Use keyboard shortcuts once you are used to them.
4. Take regular short breaks, both from typing and from sitting in the same position.

You are legally entitled to have your computer equipment and workstation assessed to make sure that it meets your own individual needs. You are also entitled to regular breaks or changes of activities.

Your employer must provide a safe environment that ensures that you are not put at risk of RSI. If you feel that they have not done this then speak to your union safety representative.

For more information on RSI, try visiting www.tuc.org.uk/rsi or www.worksmart.org.uk