Work-relevant upper limb disorders, such as RSI, are a leading cause of work-related ill health. They can impact on all forms of industry. The good news is that most work-related illness or injury can be avoided if staff and employers put health concerns at the top of their ‘to do’ lists.

Don’t let work become a pain, follow these top tips from The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy:

**Manual workers**

- Make good use of any equipment designed to help you with strenuous tasks
- Try splitting loads into manageable sizes, so that you can move them more easily. Minimise the distance you need to carry items by using handling aids, such as a trolley or lift if possible
- Avoid prolonged or repetitive tasks. If on a production line, ask your supervisor if job rotation is possible, for example, so that you work on a different side or position on the line and use different muscles
- Use both hands – pick one item with your left hand then one with your right
- Don’t over stretch to perform a task – move closer
- Avoid adopting a stooped or flexed posture when working at a bench or table by adjusting its height so that it is level with your waist
- Make sure your clothes fit well so you can move freely and keep warm – cold muscles don’t extend properly
- Check machinery regularly. If your equipment works well, it will save you from putting in extra physical effort or improvising technique
- Take more short breaks rather than one long one – use the time to stretch your arms and legs.

**Office workers**

- A change can be as good as a rest – vary your tasks, stand up to take a phone call, move around every 20 minutes or so
- Move your neck, arms and shoulders periodically while seated at your desk
- Sit facing straight ahead, feet flat on the floor (or on a sturdy footrest) and with legs uncrossed
- Adjust your chair and VDU to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes the same height as the top of the VDU
- Adjust the backrest of your chair so that you can lean back against it comfortably. Make sure your lower back is supported
- Place your mouse within easy reach and support your forearms on the desk. Keep your wrists in a relaxed, neutral position. Drive the mouse from your shoulder, not your wrist
- Don’t wedge your phone between your ear and your shoulder. Use a lightweight headset if necessary
- Use a copyholder if you work from documents
- Make sure that at breaks you leave your desk and walk around. At lunchtime try to go out of the office for a walk. This will relax your muscles, stretch your joints and get fresh air into your lungs helping you to work better in the afternoon.

The most important thing you can do to prevent work relevant musculoskeletal disorders is to maintain a good level of physical fitness. Aim to take 30 minutes of exercise outside work at least five days out of seven.