

Case Study

WRULMSD: Computer Operator

Issue: Frequent user of a personal computer suffers from lower back, neck and right shoulder pain.

Task Analysis

After further consultation it was established that:

- "Frequent" meant up to 8 hours sitting at the computer per day.
- Software package required use of the mouse nearly as often as the keyboard. Mouse was located on right hand side (RHS) of keyboard.
- Telephone was used regularly. Tendency to cradle handset into the neck when checking information with the computer.
- User had a height adjustable chair and a fixed height desk. Chair had been adjusted to provide a comfortable keying posture.
- As User was relatively short, tended to rest feet on the 5 star base of the chair.

Model Recommendations

1. Ensure frequent changes of posture occur e.g. stand up, walk around. Avoid sitting for prolonged periods. Frequent short breaks are better than longer breaks taken less often.
2. Train to use the mouse with both hands on the LHS and RHS of the keyboard. In preference, use the "hot keys" on the keyboard as an alternative to frequent use of the mouse.
3. Obtain a telephone headset from the telephone supplier for use on prolonged calls or when interaction is required with the computer.
4. Obtain a foot-rest or equivalent under the desk to stabilise the feet. They should be supported in front of the knee line to enable the back muscles to relax into the chair backrest.
5. Use the backrest angle lever on the chair frequently during the day to suit the activity. For example, when talking on the phone, angle the backrest into a reclined position. Frequent changes of posture are needed to engage a range of muscle groups.
6. Practice some "passive exercises" i.e. gentle stretches of those muscles that feel tired.
7. Relax! Muscle pain can result from feeling stressed and tense. Identify aspects of the job that may cause muscle tension and discuss strategies to address these issues.