

## Work Related Upper Limb Disorder (WRULD)

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### What is WRULD and why do I have it?

Upper limb disorders include aches and pains in the shoulders, arms, wrists, hands and fingers, as well as in the neck. They can be caused or made worse by work, for example on assembly lines, in construction, hairdressers and in work with computers.

### WRULD is more commonly seen in

- Prolonged repetitive work, particularly using the same hand or arm action
- Uncomfortable or awkward working postures
- Sustained or excessive force
- Carrying out a task for a long time without suitable rest breaks
- Working with hand-held power tools for long periods of time
- Poor working environment (including temperature and lighting)
- Poor work organisation (including workload, job demands and lack of breaks)
- Individual differences and vulnerability (some workers are more affected by certain risks).

### What are the signs and symptoms?

- Aches and pains
- Tenderness
- Weakness
- Tingling, numbness
- Cramp
- Burning
- Redness and swelling
- Stiffness
- Reduced movement in joints.

Symptoms often begin gradually and worsen throughout the working day and week. Symptoms will often ease on days off and when on annual leave.

### What physical changes can be made to treat WRULD?

Posture can help to improve the symptoms but it's the sustained and prolonged periods in one fixed position that will increase the symptoms.

- Regular change of position (Micro breaks: every 20 minutes take 20 seconds to re-set posture, change position, stretch or move). Tip: use a timer/watch to prompt.
- Avoid leaning through wrists with desk based work.
- Regular active range of motion exercises
- Neck, upper back and shoulder exercises to improve posture and ensure activation of correct muscles and reduce overuse of the forearms and hands.

## What environmental changes can be made?

- Ensure tools and equipment are fit for your hands and are suitable for the task.
- Workstations are at a suitable height for comfortable working (and that suitable chairs and footrests are provided). Consider adjustable workstations.
- Change the workstation layout to improve the posture.
- Reduce the amount of force, vibration, repetition and prolonged fixed postures.
- Reduce the length of time that operators do the same task, allowing regular changes in posture.
- Improve the working environment (temperatures, lighting).
- Changing equipment e.g. Vertical mouse, speech recognition technology.

## What your workplace can do to help

There are no specific regulations about managing the risks of upper limb disorders, but employers have legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. The Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations and the Control of Vibration Regulations may also apply.

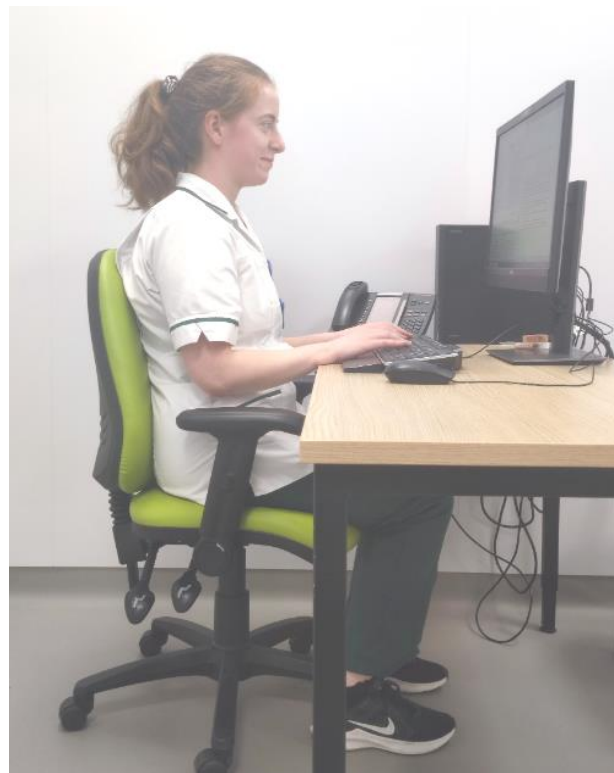
As well as considering the physical aspects of the work, you also need to take account of psychosocial risk factors. These may affect workers' psychological responses to their work and workplace conditions. Examples are high workloads, tight deadlines and lack of control over the work and working methods, which may make people more likely to develop and report ULDs.

## Recommended desk based position

Keep your shoulders relaxed and back straight and supported

Keep arms bent in an L shape with wrist in a comfortable position

Sit straight with your hips far back into the chair



Your monitor should be directly ahead of you and the top of the screen at your eye level

Keep your keyboard directly in front of you and about 4-6 inches in front of desk to rest your wrist when you are not typing

Keep your feet flat on the floor and knees in line with your hips

## Recommended exercises

These can be completed little and often throughout the day in conjunction with the physical and environmental changes.

### 1. Shoulder blade squeezes

- Sit or stand looking straight forwards and ears directly over shoulders. Squeeze your shoulder blades back together and open up through the chest and front of your shoulders. Allow your shoulders to relax.
- Hold 10 seconds and repeat five times throughout the day.



### 2. Chin tucks

- Sit or stand looking straight forwards and ears directly over shoulders. Without tilting your head down, pull your head and chin backwards so you can feel a stretch at base of your head and top of the neck.
- Hold for five seconds and repeat 10 times.



### 3. Hands behind head stretch

- Sitting. Place your hands behind your head and bring elbows out to the side to open up and stretch your chest. Do not arch your lower back.
- Hold for 10 - 20 seconds five times throughout the day.



### 4. Shoulder spirals

- Sit or stand looking straight forwards and ears directly over shoulders. Take both arms out to the side with shoulders at 90 degrees and elbows straight.
- At the same time rotate one arm forwards and the opposite arm backwards.
- Repeat this motion for 20 - 30 seconds five times throughout the day.



### 5. Neck stretches

- Sit or stand looking straight forwards and ears directly over shoulders.
- Tilt your head to one side so your ear drops towards one shoulder until you feel a stretch in the opposite side of your neck.
- Hold 20 - 30 seconds and repeat on the opposite side.



## 6. Theraband strengthening

### a) Low rows:

- Stand looking straight forwards, ears directly over shoulders with shoulders relaxed. Secure the band over a door or securely tied on a door handle. Hold the ends of the band with your hands.
- Pull band backwards by squeezing your shoulder blades together. Hold for five seconds and relax.
- 10 repetitions, three sets, x4 weekly



### b) Shoulder rotation:

- Stand looking straight forwards, ears directly over shoulders with shoulders relaxed. Secure one end of theraband to a door handle. Tuck your elbows into your side bent to 90 degrees in neutral (thumb facing up).
- Rotate shoulder outwards to the side without moving elbow or wrist and then slowly return to starting position.
- 10 repetitions, three sets, x4 weekly



## PALS

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