INTRODUCTION

Working with portable computers and other types of display screen equipment (DSE) can cause both physical and mental fatigue.

Some users may get aches and pains in their back, shoulders, neck, arms, wrists, hands or fingers. These upper limb disorders (ULDs) are often referred to as a repetitive strain injury (RSI), or more generally a musculo-skeletal disorder (MSD).

Temporary visual fatigue, with symptoms such as blurred vision, sore eyes and headaches, can also occur. There is, however, no evidence that DSE can cause disease or permanent damage to the eyes.

The risk of developing these health problems is generally low, but increases if good practice is not followed when setting-up and using your computer.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations (amended 2002) require all workstations to meet minimum requirements and for risk assessments to be undertaken for all workstations that are regularly used.

Please see for University DSE policy and guidance:
http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/offices/safety/publications/hsd005p/hsd005p.pdf

A risk assessment must also be completed for regular use of portable DSE.

To reduce your risk of developing health problems, follow these simple tips:

Seating and Posture
- Completely relax your shoulders, keep your upper arms by your sides and your forearms horizontal.
- Raise or lower your chair so this position can be maintained whilst you use your keyboard with straight (neutral) wrists.
- If your feet do not touch the floor now, or there is excess pressure on the backs of your knees/thighs, you may require a foot stool/rest.
- Sit right back into your chair, adjust the height and tilt of the chair back to obtain support and make use of the lumbar support area.
- Chair arms may need removing to ensure that it tucks under the desk.

The Screen
- Adjust screen height and tilt to allow a comfortable straight neck position.
- Your screen should be straight in front of you, at about arms length away and with your eyes level with the top of the screen.
- If you do not touch-type the screen may be more comfortable in a lower position.
- Position your screen to avoid any glare and reflections. Blinds on windows may need adjusting.
- Adjust the brightness, contrast and text size so comfortable.
The Keyboard
- This should allow enough space in front of you to support your wrists/forearms when not typing.
- Use a soft light touch when typing.

The Mouse
- Keep the mouse as close to your body as possible and your arm relaxed.
- Do not overstretch or bend your wrists awkwardly when using the mouse.
- Alternate the mouse between your left and right hand if possible.
- Use keyboard shortcuts.
- Consider software to reduce the amount of clicking.

Rest Breaks (MOST IMPORTANT)
- Short frequent breaks are better than occasional longer breaks.
  Aim for at least 5-10 minutes break following 50-60 minutes continuous computer work.
- Consider break monitoring software.
- Alternate tasks for natural breaks.
- Gentle exercises and stretches during breaks will help relieve muscle tension.
- If using your computer all day, take a break away from it for at least twenty minutes at lunchtime. Go out for a walk if possible.

Other
- Document holders placed at screen height or between the screen and keyboard, are useful if typing from hardcopy documents.
- Headsets are vital if you regularly type whilst talking on the telephone.
- Consider software training and learning to touch type to improve your speed and keyboard skills.
- Have enough space both on and under your desk.
- Keep all your computer equipment clean.

Read the University Policy on Working with Display Screen equipment:
http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/offices/safety/publications/hsd005p/index.html

Complete the self-assessment checklist in the appendix of the DSE policy, with help from your safety officer if necessary.

Having problems?
If you need advice regarding your DSE or workstation set-up and equipment, or you begin to experience any health problems that you think may be associated with DSE use, please seek advice from one or all of the following:

- your Supervisor
- your Departmental Safety Officer
- Occupational Health Tel: 36594
- Assistive Technology Tel: 34600

Delay in obtaining help/advice could lead to more severe or chronic health problems.

Portable DSE

See Portable DSE Leaflet HSD161P

Useful Web Sites
http://www.workrave.org/
http://www.posturite.co.uk/
http://www.hse.gov.uk/
http://www.backcare.org.uk/
http://www.rsiaction.org.uk/
https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/advice-information

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