

# How to look after yourself when you use computers



**This factsheet tells you about ways to look after yourself when you use computers.**

# How to use this factsheet



We are **AbilityNet**.

We are a charity that helps disabled people use technology.



Like computers, tablets, and smartphones.



This is an **Easy Read** factsheet. You may still need help to read it. You can ask someone you know for help.



For more information you can phone or email us.



Phone **0800 048 7642**

Email [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk).



# 1. What this factsheet is about



This factsheet is about **repetitive strain injury**. We call this RSI for short.

This means the pain we feel when we move our bodies in the same way again and again.

We can get RSI when we use computers. For example,



- when we type



- when we use a mouse



- when we sit at a desk.



The law says employers must make sure their staff are safe from getting RSI.

## **This factsheet tells you**



- what you can do to look after yourself when you are using a computer.



- what employers can do to keep people safe when they are working at computers.

## 2. What is RSI?

People normally feel pain from RSI in their



- neck



- shoulders



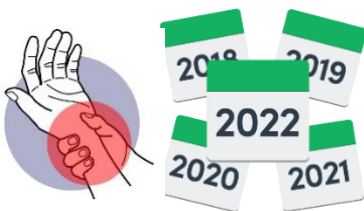
- arms



- elbows



- wrists or hands.



If you do not get help for RSI quickly, you might have it for a long time.

## How you can get RSI



You can get RSI from doing the same thing again and again for a long time. And without a break.



You can get RSI from sitting or standing in a way that is not comfortable.



You can get RSI from working at a desk that is not set up well for you.

## How do you know if you have RSI?



RSI can make your wrists, elbows and other joints feel painful.



RSI can make parts of your body feel painful to touch.



RSI can make your wrists, elbows or other joints feel stiff or tingly.



RSI can make parts of your body feel **numb**.

Numb means when you cannot feel it.



RSI can make your hands and arms **swell**.

Swell means getting bigger.



### 3. Can RSI get better?



If you think you might have RSI at work, you should speak to your employer as soon as you can.



You should ask them if there are any ways you can change how you work.



If you are still in pain you should talk to your GP.

The pain is a sign that your body needs to rest.



Your GP or health expert might give you some exercises to do to stop the pain.





Sometimes RSI might only last for a few weeks and it will go away if you rest.



Sometimes RSI can last for months and you might be in pain all day.



It might also stop you from sleeping.



Sometimes RSI is so bad it never goes away, even if you rest.

It can stop you doing things at home and at work.



This is why it is important that you should get help as soon as possible.

## 4. What you can do about RSI



You can change your desk where you work to make sure you are comfortable.



You can sit so you are not stretching too much.



You can take short breaks every 20 minutes from using the keyboard or screen.



You can do different jobs to give your body a break from doing the same thing again and again.

## 5. How to set up your desk



It is important that you sit comfortably and support your back and relax your shoulders.



If you can, change how high your chair is so you can reach the keyboard comfortably.



Put your keyboard in front of you.

Leave space for your wrists to rest when you are not typing.



If your desk is curved, make sure you sit in the middle of the curve.



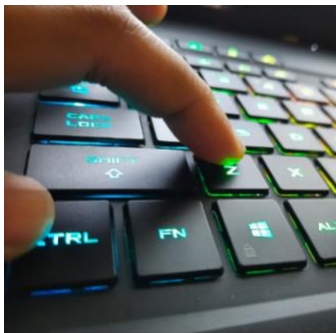
Make sure your screen is at eye level and straight in front of you.



Put your mouse as close as possible, so your wrist is comfortable.



Use a smaller keyboard without a number pad. This means you can move the mouse closer to your body.



Learn some shortcuts on the keyboard. This will mean you will use the mouse less.



If you want more **information**, click on this factsheet about [Setting up your work area.](#)

## 6. What aids you can get for RSI



You can get equipment that make computers easier to use.

**For example,**



- Supports for your hands and wrists



- Keyboards that more comfortable to use



- Different types of mice which are easier for your hands to hold.

For more information, see our factsheets on

[Accessible keyboards and mice.](#)



[Using your voice with computers.](#)

## 7. How to use laptops safely



On laptops the keyboard is connected to the screen which might make it uncomfortable to use.

**If you are using your laptop for a long time,**



- plug in a separate keyboard, screen, and mouse.



- put your laptop on something so the screen is eye level.



- make sure the laptop is on something level. Not your lap.



- have short breaks to stop your back and shoulders hurting.

- sit up straight and support your back with your chair.

## 8. What employers can do



The law says employers must make it safe for people to work and use screens.



Employers should listen to staff's problems and think about how they can help



Employers should train staff to work safely with screens.



Employers should help people who have RSI when they come back to work.



Employers should keep checking that the work is safe for staff.



## 9. Where you can get more help



### NHS Choices

Visit the website

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/repetitive-strain-injury-rsi/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/repetitive-strain-injury-rsi/).

RSI Action...

### RSI Action

RSI Action is a charity that helps people with RSI. Visit the website

[www.rsiaction.org.uk/](http://www.rsiaction.org.uk/).



### Health and Safety Executive

Visit the website

[www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wruldex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wruldex.htm).



### The Institute of Occupational Safety and Health

Find out about making workplaces safer.

Visit the website

[www.iosh.com/health-and-safety-professionals/improve-your-knowledge/occupational-health-toolkit/](http://www.iosh.com/health-and-safety-professionals/improve-your-knowledge/occupational-health-toolkit/).

# 10. How AbilityNet can help you

## My Computer My Way



The **My Computer My Way** website tells you how you can make your computer, tablet or smartphone accessible.

Website

[mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk](http://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk).

## Advice and information



If you have any questions, you can contact us at **AbilityNet**.

We are here to help you.



**Phone**

0800 048 7642



**Email**

[enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk).

## Support with technology at home



AbilityNet volunteers can help you with your computer, tablet or smartphone.



If you need support at home, you can book an AbilityNet volunteer to visit you.



You do **not** have to pay AbilityNet for support at home.

For more information, visit [www.abilitynet.org.uk/at-home](http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/at-home).