



MSK AWARE

A holistic approach to musculoskeletal health

Keeping people moving

www.mskaware.org

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MSK AWARE

A holistic approach to musculoskeletal health

How you can support MSK health

www.mskaware.org

Key actions to create a safe and healthy workplace that supports MSK health Identified by experts in MSK health, health and safety, public health, occupational health and HR, including OHID (PHE), HSE and RoSPA, along with employers and employees from businesses large and small brought together by MSKAware CIC



MSK AWARE

A holistic approach to musculoskeletal health

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Why be **MSK Aware**

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions

- the most common problem in the UK workplace and one of the commonest causes of absence from work at a high cost to individuals, employers and society.
- reported by roughly 3 out of every 5 employees.
- cause pain and reduce dexterity and mobility.
- affect everyday activities and impact on general health & wellbeing.
- affect all ages but more common with increasing age.

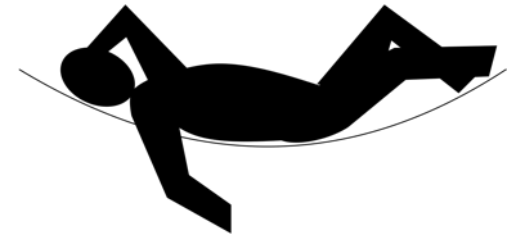
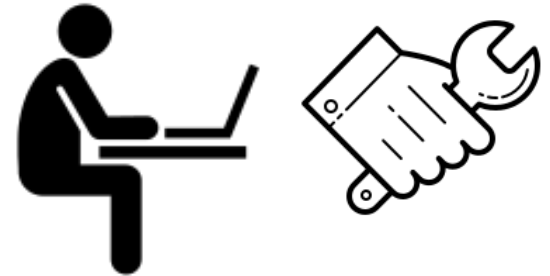
BUT many people are not aware of how important it is and what they can do to help themselves and others.



WHAT IS MSK HEALTH AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU

What is musculoskeletal health?

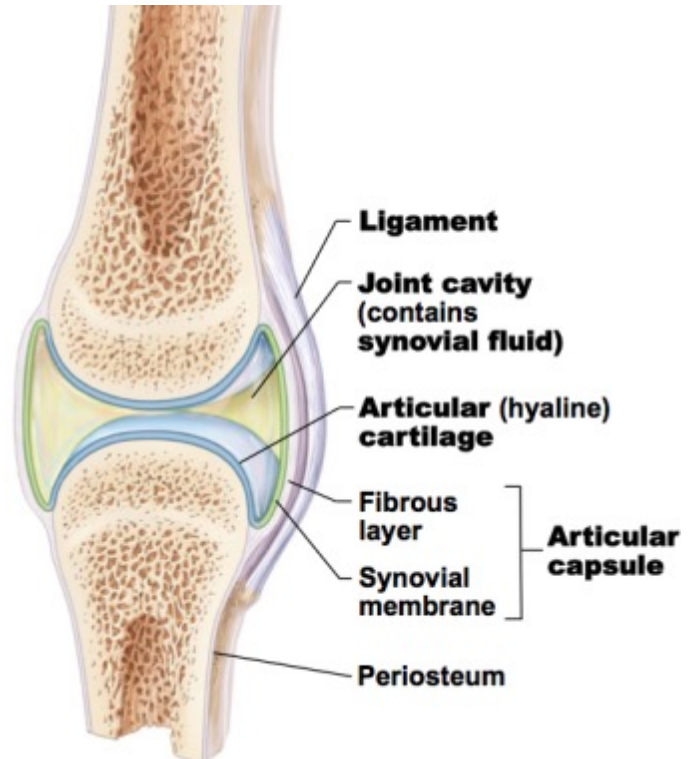
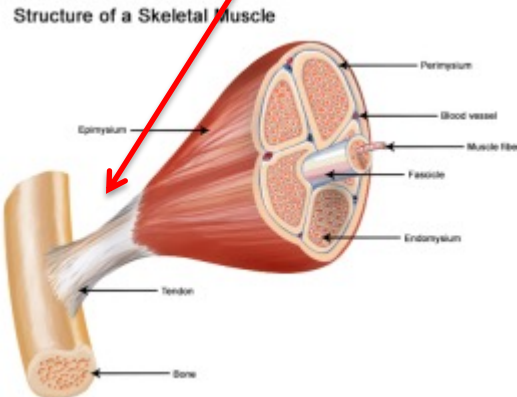
- Working joints and muscles and strong bones
- The ability to do in comfort the physical tasks of daily life
 - To work, rest and play!
 - To stay healthy



Musculoskeletal Health: Bones , joints and muscles working together give us movement



Tendons attach
muscle to
bone

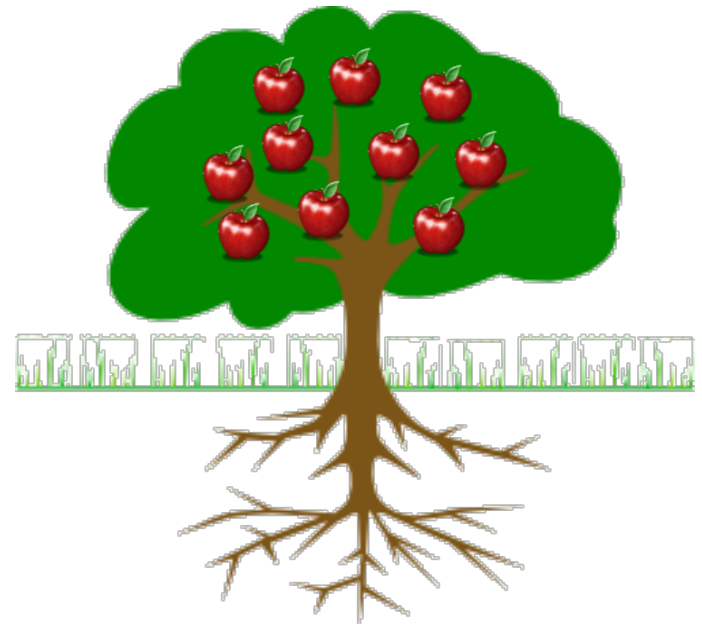


Good musculoskeletal (MSK) health is integral to a full and healthy working life

The musculoskeletal system is the roots and trunk of the tree

It gives us mobility, dexterity and agility and enables us to walk, run, stand, sit, lift and carry

The fruit is good physical & mental health and wellbeing, activities of daily living, work and economic independence



Good musculoskeletal (MSK) health is integral to a full and healthy working life

MSK health is essential for all kinds of work affecting all industries and business sectors, from construction to banking.

It gives us mobility, dexterity and agility and enables us to walk, run, stand, sit, lift and carry

The fruit is good physical & mental health and wellbeing, activities of daily living, **work and economic independence**



How is your musculoskeletal health?

How good is your strength, endurance, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, reaction time, and balance



walking
speed test



Blinded
one-leg
balance test



Hand grip
strength test



chair
rise test



Sitting-rising
test



Dance
test

What can go wrong

- Most of us get aches and pains or stiffness at some time, particularly as we get older.
- Some are short lived, often following an injury. Others can be lifelong.
- Affect 1 in 5 adults and more common as people get older
- There is a wide variety of conditions that affect our bones, joints and muscles



Causes

Inflammatory diseases, ageing, congenital or developmental, trauma, injuries (sports, occupational).

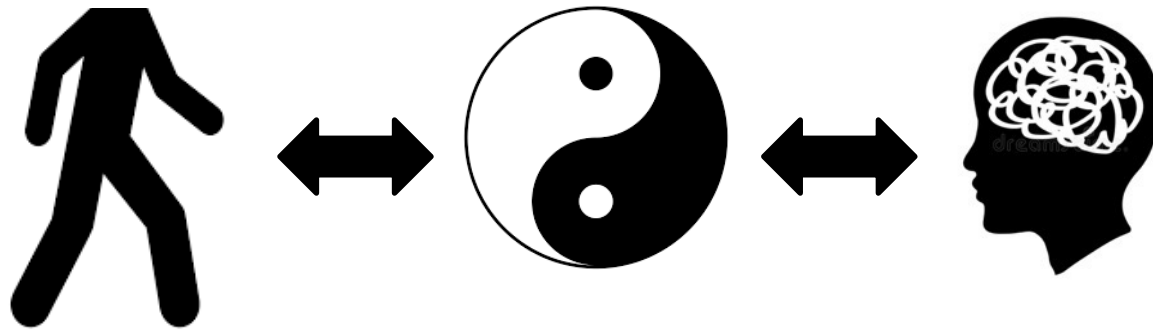
Sometimes the causes are unclear and the pain is just described by what is affected

What is the impact of MSK problems

- Pain
- Stiffness
- Sleep loss and tiredness
- Reduced mobility and dexterity
- Limit everyday activities
 - Everyday chores
 - Work
 - Leisure activities
- Mental health - stress, anxiety, depression, fear of future



MSK problems and mental health



- MSK and mental health problems often interrelated.
- MSK problems → lack of sleep, depression and/or stress.
- Stress, anxiety and depression also cause MSK pain.
- Mental health affects ability to deal with an MSK problem.



WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU AS AN EMPLOYER

Musculoskeletal conditions are the main cause for lost working days

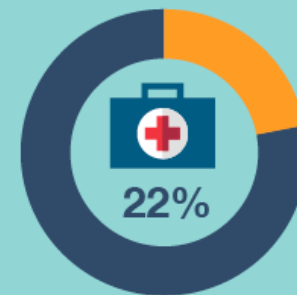
Impact of MSK on productivity

MSK 2nd biggest cause of days lost in work after cough and colds



In 2016,

over 30.8 million
working days are lost due
to MSK conditions



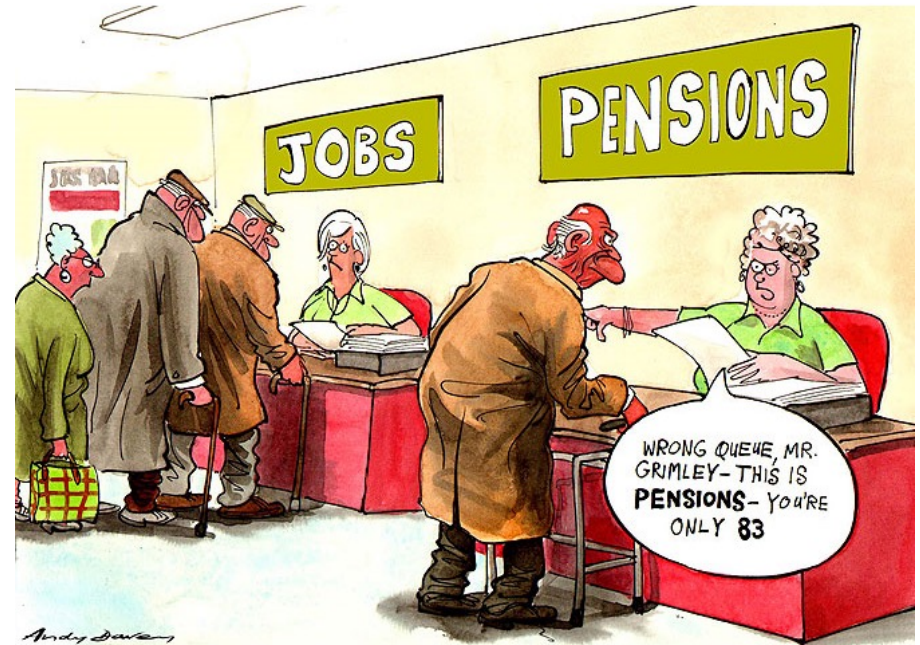
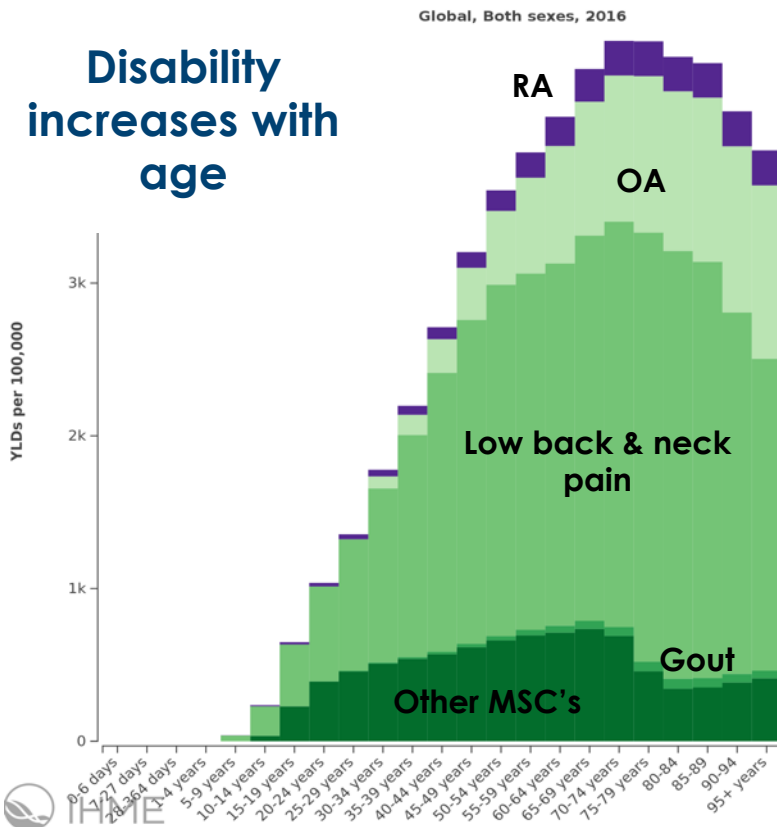
that accounts for 22%
of sickness absence

MSK conditions cost
the UK an estimated



Why MSK health matters

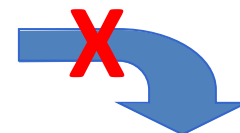
MSK problems become more common as people get older when many will also face several other health problems but are expected to continue working.



Musculoskeletal Health and Work

Musculoskeletal conditions limit work capacity

eg osteoarthritis of the hip or knee prevents many people aged over 50 years working



WORK

Work causes or aggravates musculoskeletal conditions

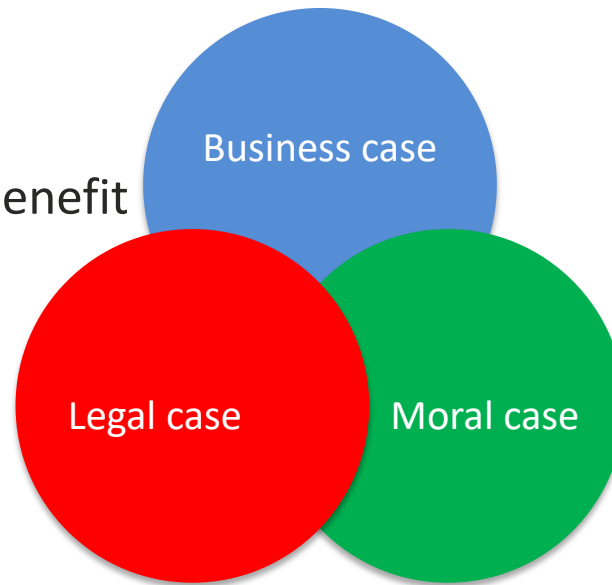
eg work causes or worsens back pain, repetitive work related to upper limb problems



Why be MSK Aware?

MSK problems represent a substantial cost to your business through:

- Sick pay
- Lost productivity
- Loss of key skills
- Retraining costs
- Legal costs and injury benefit



Employers have a legal duty to provide safe and healthy workplaces

Moral case is significant

- work can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing, and helps create a sense of purpose
- the best employers go beyond legislated minimum standards and adhere to the highest standards of corporate social responsibility.
- a safe and healthy workplace is a key component of ESG (Environmental, social and governance)
- it supports recruitment & retention of employees and boosts productivity.



Be MSK Aware

As an employer, you need to be MSK Aware

- Recognise that MSK health is important in your organisation and make a commitment from all tiers within organisation to provide a safe and healthy workplace that prevents MSK risks, promotes health and wellbeing and is supportive for those with MSK conditions.
- The reasons are compelling





Know the challenges and needs in your organisation

Understand your MSK needs

As an employer, you have a legal duty to provide safe and healthy workplace. To provide the right support to your workers to meet and build on your legal duties, you must know the MSK needs of your workplace and understand the challenges for your workforce.

You need to know:

The characteristics of the work: employee tasks with risks to MSK health, physical and mental demands of tasks, variations in workload, length of working day, shift patterns, breaks, work settings

The characteristics of your workforce: age spectrum, experience, gender, fitness, mixture of skills and expertise, retention, staff shortages,

The MSK problems of your workforce: sickness records, staff surveys and appraisals



Be MSK Aware

Employers need to

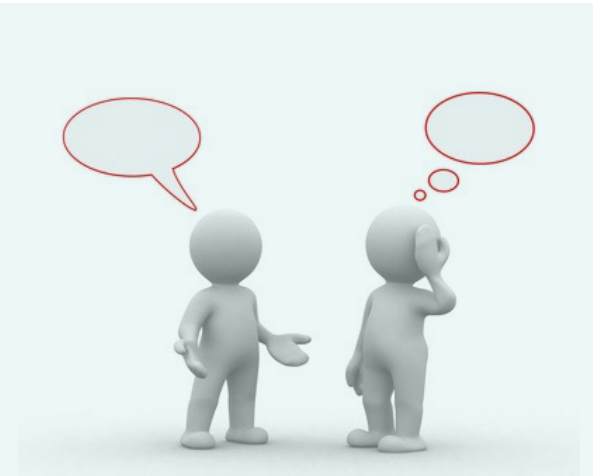
- Be proactive
- Ensure everyone at all levels of the organisation knows their role and responsibilities
- Create an open culture of health and wellbeing
- Have a an MSK health workplace champion



Open communication is essential

A workplace with a positive open culture enables an employee to look after their own MSK health, receive early treatment and support, and continue to work even if they have some limitations, and enables the employer to know how they can help.

An open culture should be led from the top, with a clear signal from senior management that the organisation cares about the wellbeing of all employees, at all levels.



HOW TO LOOK AFTER MUSCULOSKELETAL HEALTH



What puts us at risk

The way I am

- Age
- Genetics
- Mechanics

The way I live

- Diet
- Obesity
- Physical activity
- Alcohol
- Smoking

What puts me at risk

What happens to me

- Injuries
- Stress
- Bad activities such as lifting, twisting, repetitive movements, awkward postures and prolonged sitting.

The unexpected

- Diseases like Rheumatoid Arthritis

STEP 1

Looking after your MSK health at home & at work

- Follow a bone and joint healthy lifestyle
 - Stay physical active to remain fit
 - Maintain an ideal weight
 - Eat a balanced diet with calcium and fish oils
 - Avoid smoking and excess alcohol



- This is also good for our general health

Be active



Be active

at least **150** minutes moderate intensity per week
increased breathing
able to talk

OR

at least **75** minutes vigorous intensity per week
breathing fast
difficulty talking

or a combination of both

Build strength
to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

on at least **2** days a week

Swim
Brisk walk
Cycle
Gym
Yoga
Carry heavy bags
Run
Stairs
Sport
Bowls
Tai Chi
Dance

Minimise sedentary time
Break up periods of inactivity

Improve balance
For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls
2 days a week

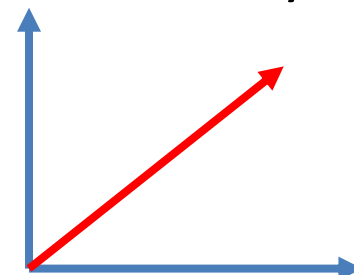
UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

There are many ways to increase physical activity



..and any increase benefits health

Physical activity



Health gains

Eat a balanced diet and maintain an ideal weight



Calcium and fish oils are good for bones and joints



Commit to a healthy lifestyle in and out of the workplace - have a personal plan, set goals and take action



- How important is it to you to make a change? (1-10)
- How confident are you that you will make that change? (1-10)



Keep active

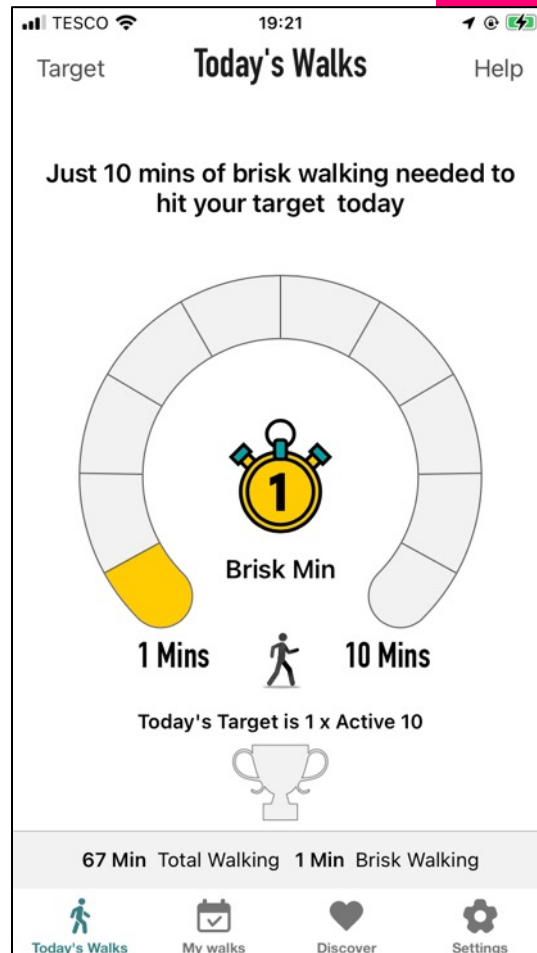
- Keep active for
 - strength and balance
 - flexibility
 - overall fitness
- Find or make opportunities to be active
 - to and from work
 - minibreaks
 - meal breaks
 - outside work

Brisk walking

Better Health

Let's do this

NHS



Active
10



Stretches to improve flexibility

- Many recommended simple exercises to improve flexibility
- Need to be performed regularly as part of mini-breaks or warm-ups



30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

neck rolls

30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

shoulder rolls



30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

big arm circles

60^{sec}

arm swings



60^{sec}

wrist circles

60^{sec}

bent over twist



30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

hip circles

30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

forward leg swings



30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

lateral leg swings

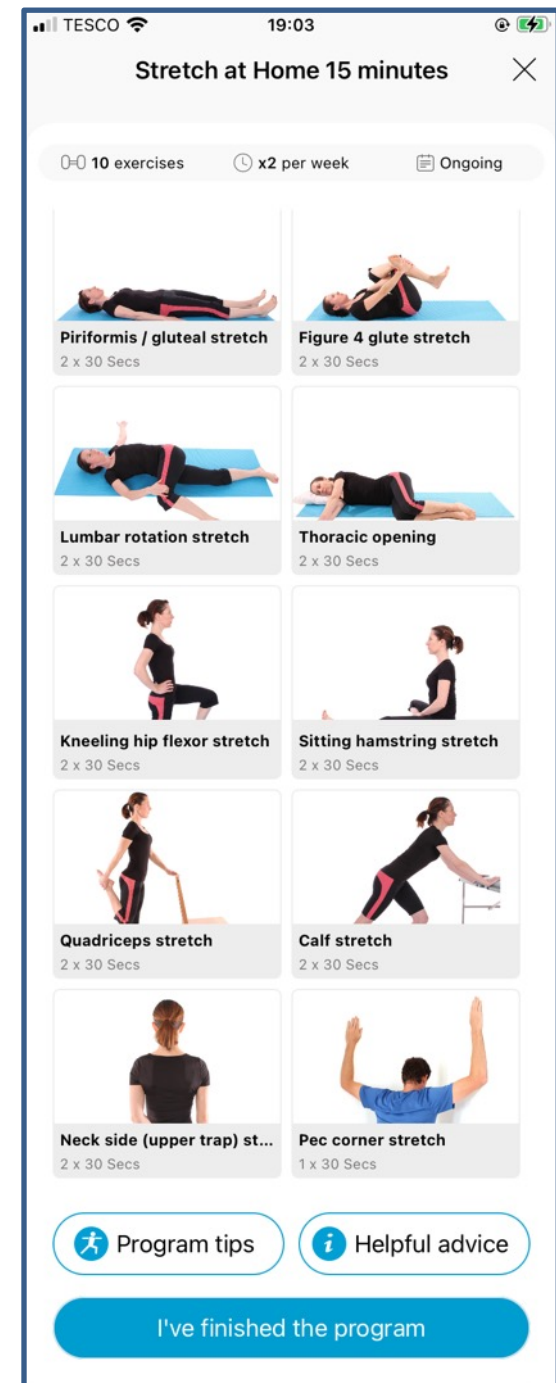
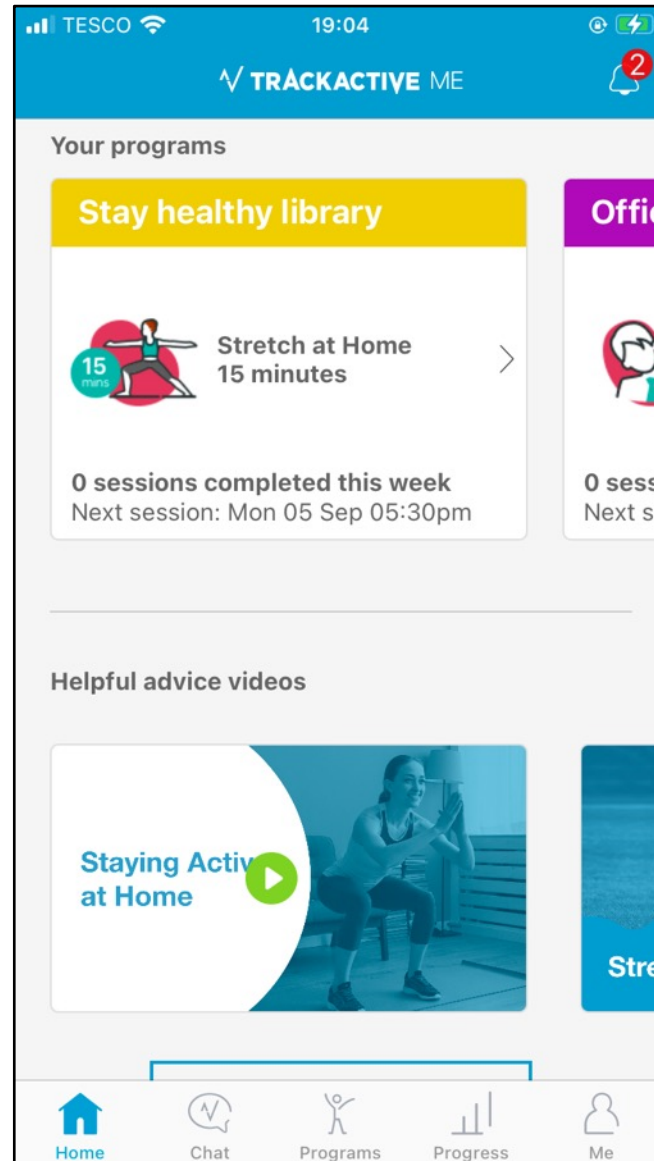
30^{sec} + 30^{sec}

knee circles



TrackActiveMe

A range of stretching and strengthening exercises that can be tailored to meet your needs



STEP 2

Reduce your risks and protect MSK health in work

- Work safely - know and follow the best way to do your tasks - make sure you have the right training and right equipment
- Recognise potentially hazardous tasks or bad practices – they are not always obvious
- Know your limitations
- Report any risks you identify – talk with others, speak up before problems happen to you or others.



'Do things the right way, even if no one is looking'

Examples of hazardous tasks and bad practices

- Lifting and twisting
- Repetitive movements
- Awkward postures
- Poor workstations ie home working
- Prolonged sitting
- Intermittent heavy physical work





Preventing falls and injuries

- Improve your strength and balance
- Recognise any personal risks – glasses, footwear, medical conditions and medication
- Recognise and avoid or remove hazards – at work, at home and when doing leisure activities



Do things the right way

- even if no one is looking

- Manual handling
- Display screen equipment (DSE)
- Intermittent heavy work
- Sedentary
- Home working



BEWARE THE CHAIR

Get up and get moving! Three minutes every hour can make all the difference to your muscles and your mind. Set an alert to:

TAKE 3 MINS
for a stand
and stretch



TAKE 3 MINS
for a chat -
walk and talk



TAKE 3 MINS
for deep
breathing



TAKE 3 MINS
for a jolly jig,
song or dance



TAKE 3 MINS
for a snack



TAKE 3 MINS
for a cuppa



TAKE 3 MINS
for fresh air



**VERSUS
ARTHRITIS**

Contact corporatepartners@versusarthritis.org to find out more about how you can keep and stay healthy in the home and the office.



Health and Safety
Executive

Display screen equipment (DSE) workstation checklist



THE BEST RUN

PUBLICATIONS AND
PRODUCTS FROM 

Manual handling at work A brief guide



Perfect Sitting Needs a Perfect Setting Ergonomic Workplace Factsheet



Setting Up Your Workplace

Anyone who spends most of his workday in a seated position should ensure a comfortable setup to be most productive. To stay healthy, you not only need regular exercise, but also a workplace that is tailored to your needs.



Watch the videos below about how to set up your workplace.

Office Workplace:

1. How to adjust your [chair](#)
2. How to adjust your [backrest](#)
3. How to adjust your [armrests](#)
4. How to adjust your [desk height](#)
5. How to adjust your [monitor](#)
6. How to position your [keyboard and mouse](#)
7. How to set up your [sit-stand desk](#)

Mobile Workplace:

- How to set up your [Laptop workstation](#)
- How to set up your [Laptop workstation without utilities](#)
- COVID-19 Pandemic: [Ergonomics tips for working from Home](#)



Guides to good practice

Dangers of sedentary work and need to get moving



Prolonged sitting can lead to



Cardiovascular diseases



Type 2 diabetes



Loss of fitness and obesity



Muscle stiffness and weakness



Back pain / spinal disc compression



Certain types of cancer

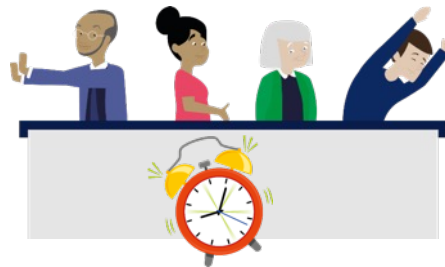


Premature death

Simple things you can do



Change posture frequently



Take microbreaks every 20-30 mins



Incorporate more movement into daily working life

Tips for good teleworking

Work environment – ideally a separate home-office where you can work without being disturbed with good lighting and ventilation



Work station – make home office a comfortable & healthy workplace



Sedentary behaviour – good posture and move regularly

Work organisation – schedule the workday including breaks, have a good routine and respect ‘normal’ working hours

Support – stay connected with colleagues and supervisor by regular phone calls or virtual meetings; informal meetings and coffee breaks; take breaks to clear your head

Warming up before physical activity to reduce risk of injuries

- Warm up exercises and stretches before starting physical work will reduce the risk of injuries.
- Invest a few minutes
- It is normal practice in sport, make it normal practice at work

A guide for footballers & coaches | Warm up

3 stage warm up

Primary activity Aim to make transition from low to moderate activity in order to facilitate:

- INCREASE IN MUSCLE AND CORE BODY TEMPERATURE
- A GRADUAL RANGE OF MOVEMENT EXPOSURE

45^{min} 70^{bpm} 85^{bpm} INCREASE IN HEART RATE

Movement preparation & planning This stage should:

- IMPROVE PLANNED MOVEMENT STRATEGIES
- REPLICATE MOVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH FOOTBALL
- INCREASED DEMAND ON JOINT RANGES & MUSCLE ACTIVATION

Sports specific competencies Emphasis is on game based scenarios to enable:

- HIGH INTENSITY SHORT BURSTS OF ACTIVITY
- LARGER JOINT RANGES & MUSCLE ACTIVATION
- LANDING AND EXPLOSIVE ACTIVITY

> A well-structured warm up can increase exposure to training variables such as techniques, tactics, movement skill and athletic competencies.
> Exercise variety throughout a warm up is encouraged to improve movement variability and aid physical competence.
> There are a number of scenarios that can be performed for position specific drills and team based drills, and this is where a coach is encouraged to be creative with their drills.
> The integration of structured skill based and physical competence activities during a prolonged warm up will add a vast amount of athletic development and performance time over a season.

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STEP 3

Act early if you have a MSK problem and be able to manage your MSK problem in the workplace



Act if you have a problem that affects your everyday activities including work

How can people who have an MSD be helped?

Early intervention

- The sooner the better to achieve the best outcomes
- Small changes can make a difference
- Early access to professional support and follow the advice
- Firstly, talk to your manager if you have a problem
- Secondly, everyone needs to know how to act in response to problem



How can people who have a MSK condition be helped?

Access to expert advice

- Seek medical advice from occupational health services or other healthcare providers if a musculoskeletal condition is affecting work as there are effective treatments



Adjustments in the workplace

- Simple workplace measures can be effective
- Employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable a disabled person to work
- 'Access to Work' grants are available to help pay for adjustments at work and for specialist assessments



Self Management

- Keep active but pace yourself, setting realistic goals



How to look after MSK health at work, at home and at leisure

- Walk to work (even if home working)
- Set up your workstation
- Keep moving (regular micro- and mini-breaks, stretches, vary tasks and episodes of brisker activity)
- Keep hydrated
- Clear your head
- Avoid risks
- Speak up if a problem



Simple practices to do in the workplace

2 minutes:

- Take a drink
- Mini Stretch
- Mindfulness Practice
- Take a few deep breathes, to reduce tension, re-energise

10 minutes:

- Brisk Walk outside or Walk & Talk
- Get some fresh Air, connect with nature
- Follow a 10 minute exercise video
- Check in with a friend or colleague, (Wellbeing Conversation), have a chat and laugh

5 minutes:

- Do 5 minute stretch
- Make a drink and move!
- Make use of App's

30 minutes:

- Use your lunch break to refuel, take a break & recharge
#UseItDon'tLoseIt
- Exercise – Do something you love but keep moving!





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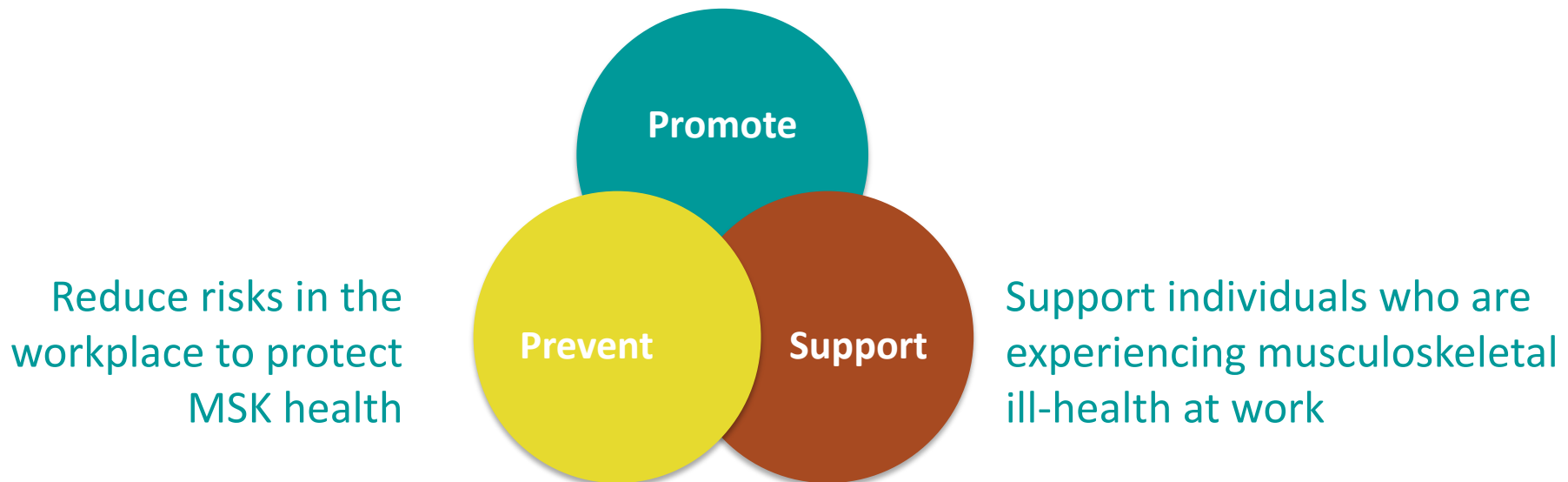
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How can employers enable these actions in the workplace - including but going beyond their legal duty ?



Look after MSK health at home & at work



Understand the MSK health of your workforce

- Use sickness records, staff surveys and appraisals, and hold regular, informal meetings with groups of employees to improve your understanding of the impact of MSK problems and the dynamics of the workplace.

Ask

- “How are you?”
- “Do you have any health problems that affect you, such as pain, stiffness or stress?”
- “Can you do all the physical roles you need to without difficulty?”
- “If you have difficulties, how can we help you work around them?”



Promote

Key actions to look after MSK health at home & at work



Employers

- **Open discussions** on healthy lifestyles and lead by example.
- Enable your workers to develop **positive attitudes** towards MSK health both in and outside the workplace.
- Facilitate **MSK health promoting activities** such as warm-ups and minibreaks to move and stretch.
- Ensure everyone knows what **support and facilities are available** to promote their MSK health, ie through exercise.



Prevent

Key actions to reduce risks in the workplace to protect MSK health



Employers

- **Manage the risks** in your workplace.
- Provide **training**, time and equipment to enable employees to carry out tasks safely.
- Ensure **good practice**.
- Tackle root causes with **good ergonomic design** and health & safety procedures.
- Have clear procedures for **reporting risks** and incidents in the workplace.
- Encourage and enable **workers to speak up** if they see a health & safety risk.



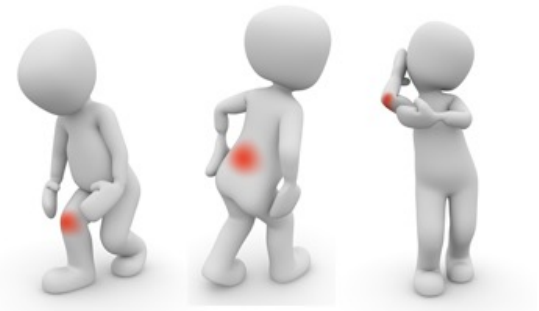
Support

Key actions to support individuals experiencing musculoskeletal ill-health at work



Employers (1)

- Understand the **impact** of MSK conditions.
- Enable, encourage and respond to **early reporting** of MSK problems.
- Facilitate **early intervention** with clear pathways and by looking for **simple solutions** and adaptations to work.
- Know what **resources** are available and how to signpost workers ie occupational health and physio services.



Support

Key actions to support individuals experiencing musculoskeletal ill-health at work



Employers (2)

- Enable employees to **speak up** and work together with employers, managers and health professionals to find solutions
- Ensure everyone knows **employee rights**, what support they can ask for and how it can be accessed.
- **Be flexible** in finding solutions to enable workers to stay in work.
- **Learn from MSK problems** that present, review work practices and then integrate any lessons into work practices and training.



Ensuring managers to understand MSK health and how they can support employees

Managers need to

- value musculoskeletal health
- be aware of the risk factors
- know how to communicate with and support employees
- know what advice and support is available
- know and understand how to implement





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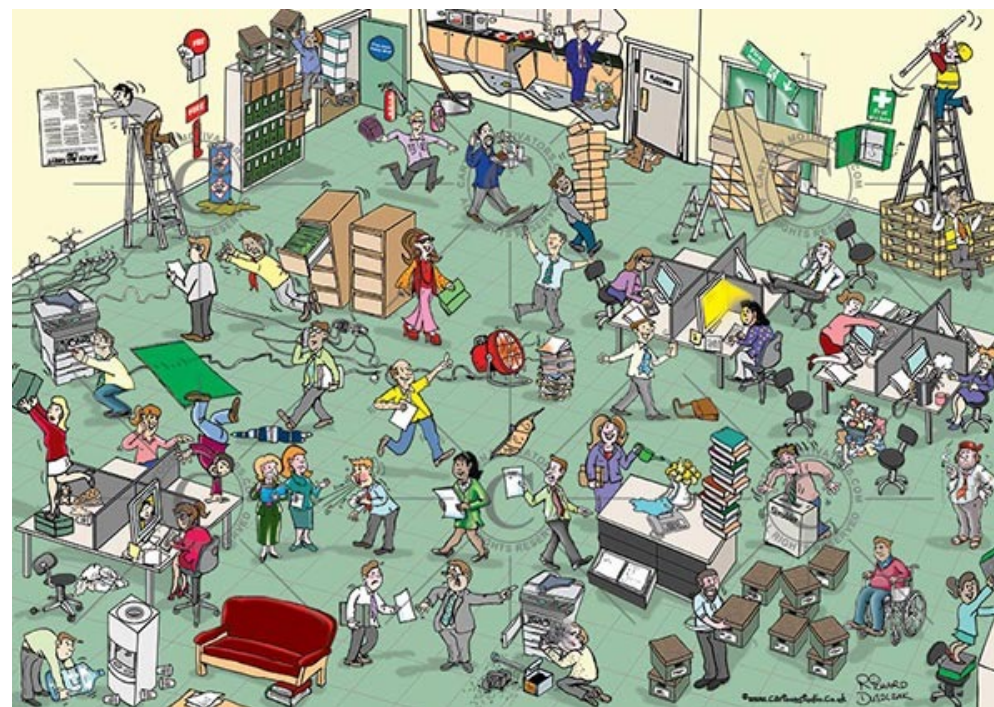
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A MSK healthy workplace

The ultimate goal is to provide a workplace that

- takes preventative action by reducing risks in the workplace
- promotes physical health
- encourages and supports early intervention for MSK problems
- accommodates effective rehabilitation and return to work



With everyone knowing what they can and should be doing to achieve this



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Achieving a MSK healthy workplace

Inform / make aware (one way)

Encourage / facilitate / listen & act (two way)

Lead by example (exemplary)



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Steps taken to facilitate staff to keep active

Employees are **made aware** that physical activity during breaks at work and outside of work is generally beneficial to their MSK health

Opportunities for physical activity are **promoted** within the business – for example advertising local classes. Employees are **listened to and are encouraged** to actively engage in any physical activity promotion in the workplace.

Physical activity opportunities are **facilitated** by the business and employees are **encouraged** to be physically active at all times and **enabled** to incorporate this into their working day through allocated time and facilities. **Feedback** from employees is listened to and where possible acted on.



Keep active at home and at work



Know the risks and do things the right way



Speak up and seek advice / help if you have a problem with your MSK health – do not suffer in silence



Know how to get help and support

The simple take home message of what we all need to do



- This is a general approach to supporting MSK health in your workplace.
- For a bespoke solution to meet the specific needs of your workplace and employees contact info@mskaware.org





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Move it, don't loose it!



Let's stretch!





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