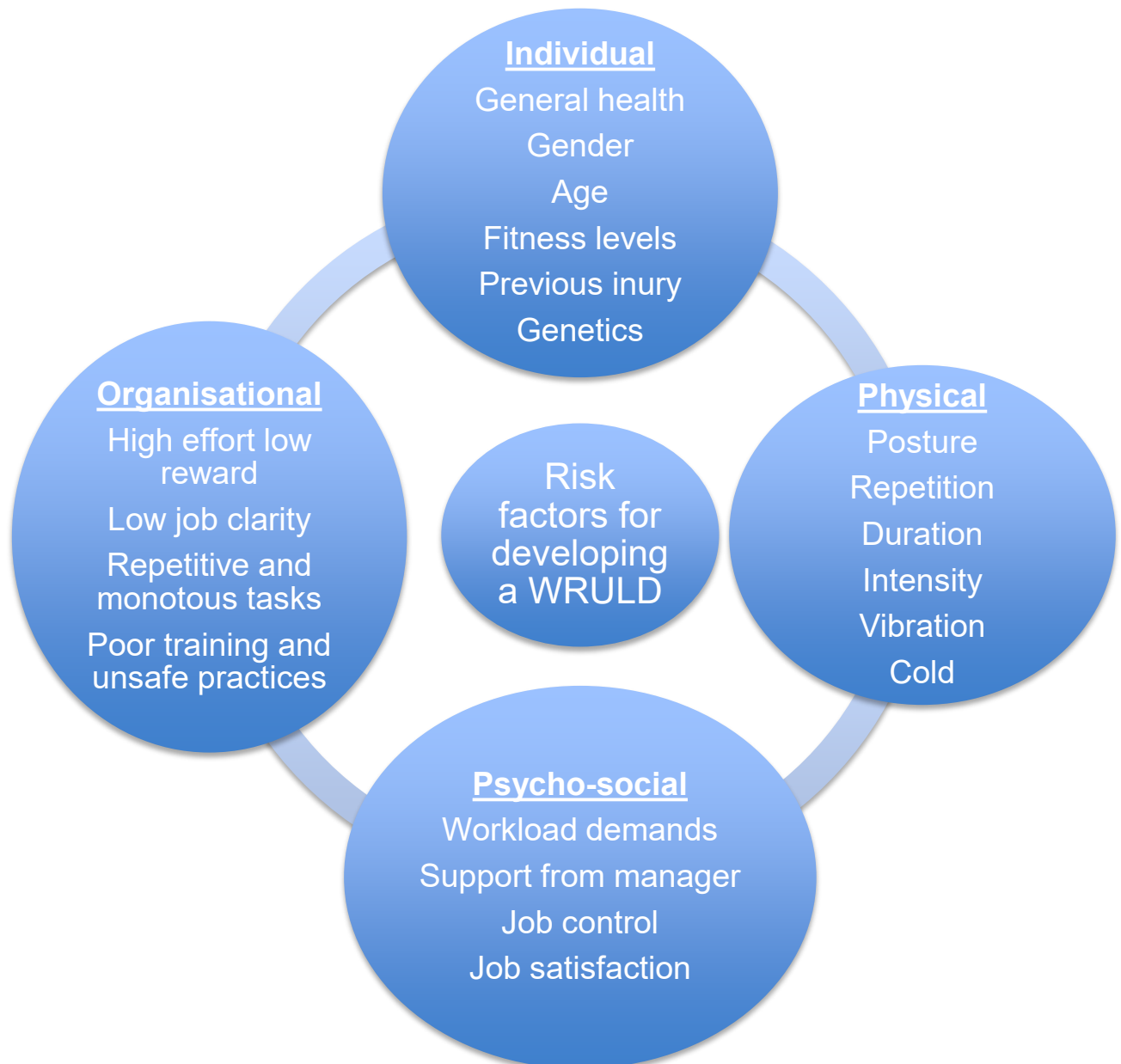


## WORK RELATED UPPER LIMB DISORDERS (WRULDs)

Many people in the work place are familiar with the term repetitive strain injury (RSI). Research has suggested that this term is inappropriate as it “blames” repetition as the sole cause of the problem and does not take the whole picture into account. The research has demonstrated that our various musculoskeletal aches and pains are multifactorial in origin with many risk factors playing a part (refer to work related musculoskeletal disorders advice leaflet). Hence “RSI” has been renamed WRULDs. The diagram below shows some of the many risk factors involved in WRULDs.

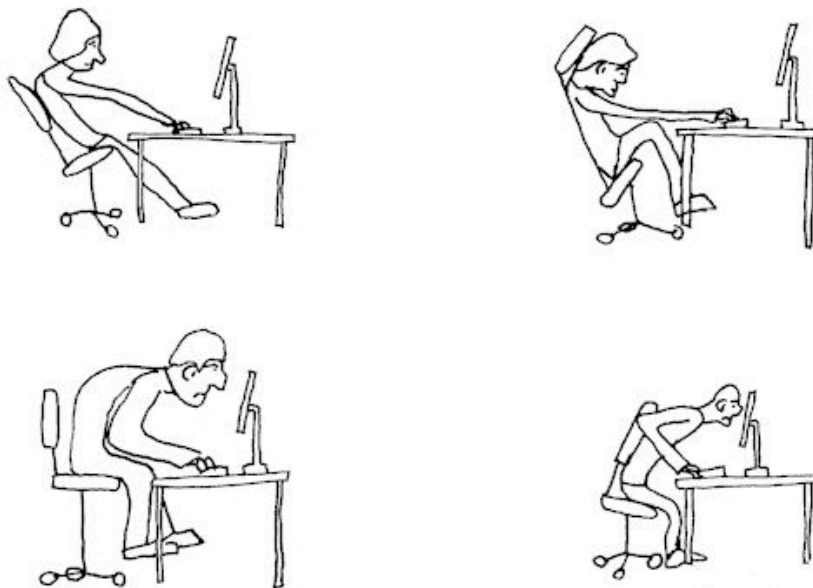


There are 3 types of work related upper limb disorders:

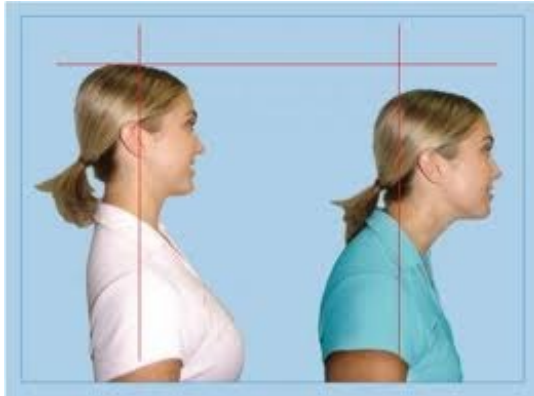
1. Neck pain, tension, discomfort, nerve impingement
2. A specific diagnosis e.g. carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, tenosynovitis etc.
3. Non-specific e.g. vague, variable, diffuse, radiating aches and pains throughout the upper limb

This advice leaflet will pay particular attention to the physical risk factors involved in developing a WRULD as these are within your control and hence within your power to change. Other factors such what you think and feel about your pain are important and are discussed in another advice leaflet (see stress and pain and pain explained).

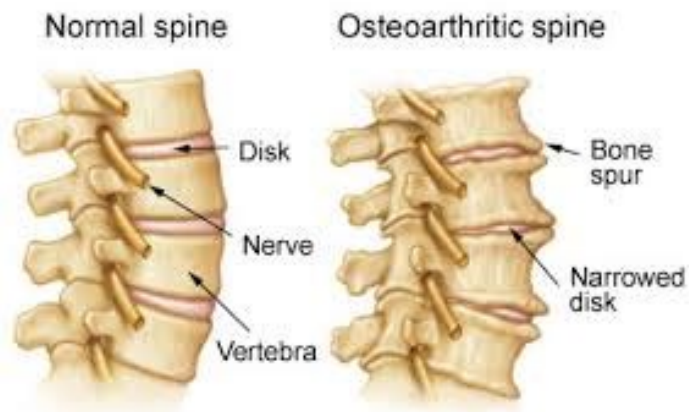
Some people adopt unhealthy sitting postures when in the workplace.



These awkward sitting postures eliminate the normal S-shape curve of the spine.

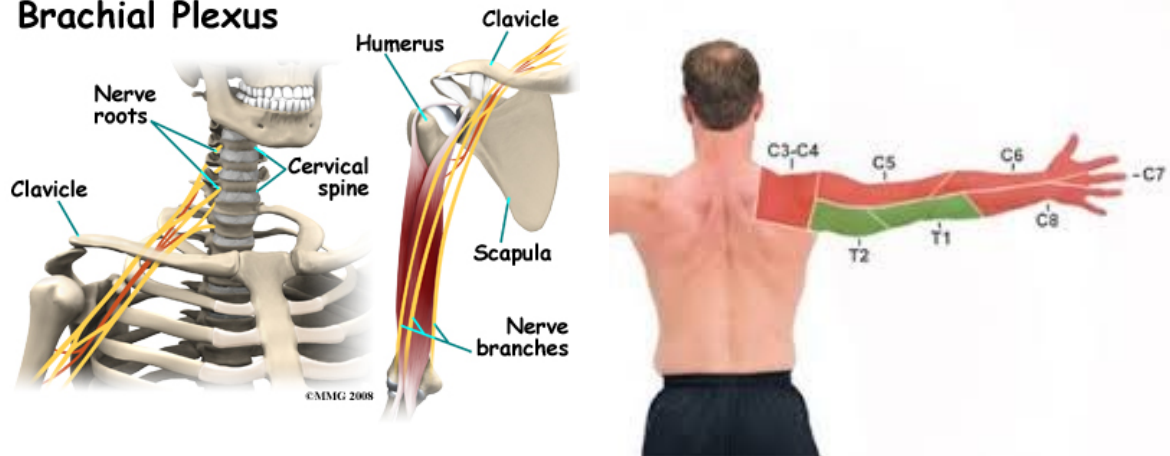


This in turn places excessive strain on the ligaments, joints, muscles, discs and bones in the neck and upper spine that can lead to degenerative changes.

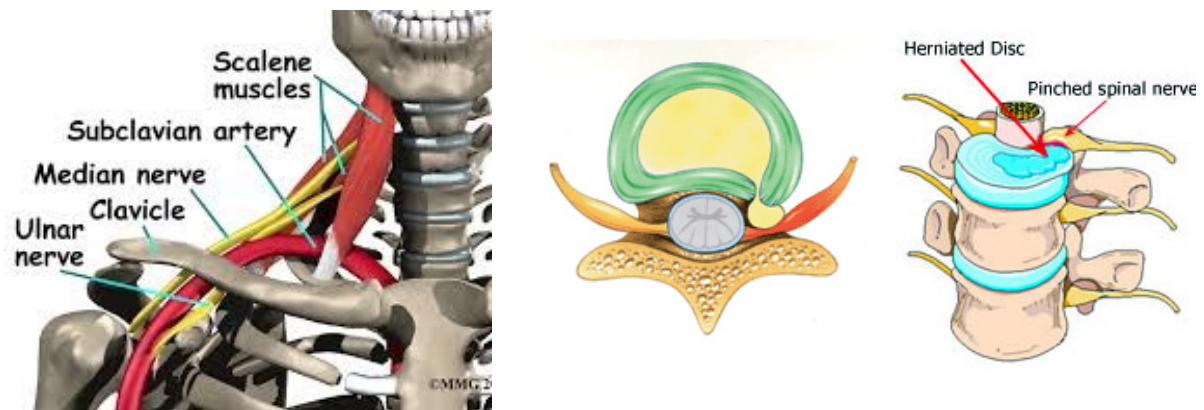


The degenerative changes in the neck and upper spine can negatively affect the nerves from the spinal cord that exit the neck and travel down your arm to end in your hand.

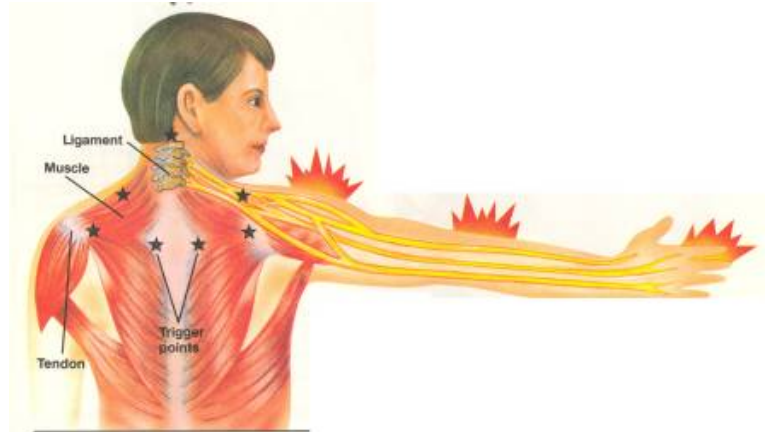
## Brachial Plexus



These nerves can become “trapped” or “pinched” by a combination of tight muscles, thickening ligaments and/or a bulging disc.



This then leads to one of the 3 types of WRULDs (neck, specific, or non-specific pain) that people experience.



### So what can I do if I have a WRULD?

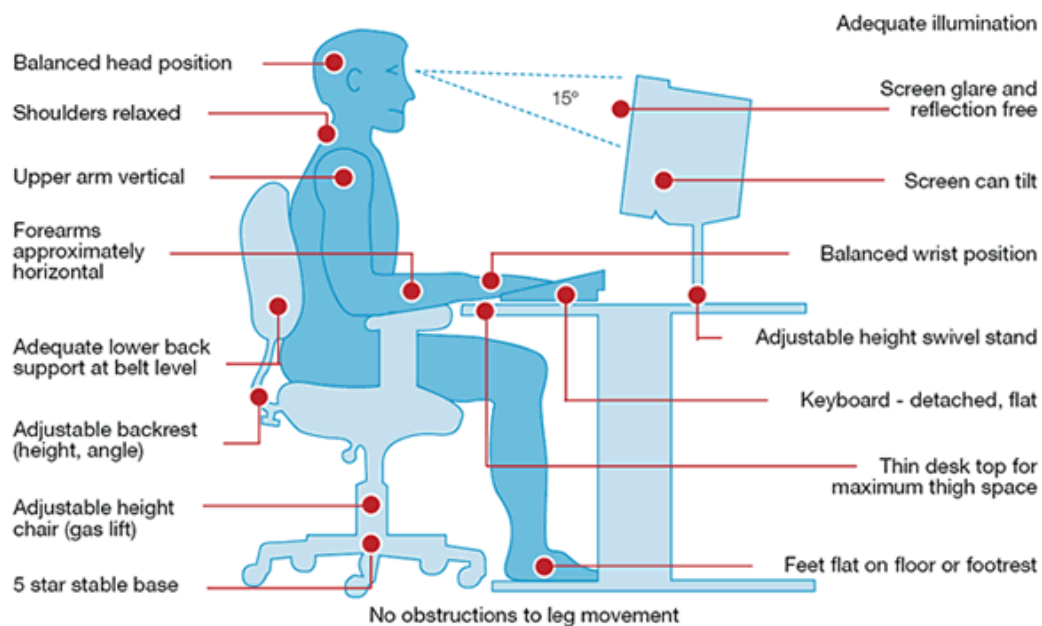
If you work in an office, then the following advice will benefit you:

- A change can be as good as a rest – vary your tasks, stand up to take a phone call, move around and change your posture.
- Move your neck, arms and shoulders periodically while seated at your desk
- Sit facing straight ahead, feet flat on the floor (or on a sturdy footrest) and with legs uncrossed
- Adjust your chair and VDU to find the most comfortable position for your work. As a broad guide, your forearms should be approximately horizontal and your eyes the same height as the top of the VDU
- Adjust the backrest of your chair so that you can lean back against it comfortably. Make sure your lower back is supported
- Place your mouse within easy reach and support your forearms on the desk. Keep your wrists in a relaxed, neutral position. Drive the mouse from your shoulder, not your wrist
- Don't wedge your phone between your ear and your shoulder. Use a lightweight headset if necessary
- Use a copyholder if you work from documents
- Make sure that at breaks you leave your desk and walk around. At lunchtime try to go out of the office for a walk. This will relax your muscles, stretch your joints and get fresh air into your lungs helping you to work better in the afternoon.



### Workstation adjustment and efficient working posture

Slouching, leaning and bending in a chair can lead to discomfort and long term pain. Use this quick setup sheet to aid a comfortable environment.



If you work in an office, then the following advice will benefit you:

- Make good use of any equipment designed to help you with strenuous tasks
- Try splitting loads into manageable sizes, so that you can move them more easily. Minimise the distance you need to carry items by using handling aids, such as a trolley or lift if possible
- Avoid prolonged or repetitive tasks. If on a production line, ask your supervisor if job rotation is possible, for example, so that you work on a different side or position on the line and use different muscles
- Use both hands – pick one item with your left hand then one with your right



- Don't over stretch to perform a task – move closer
- Avoid adopting a stooped or flexed posture when working at a bench or table by adjusting its height so that it is level with your waist
- Make sure your clothes fit well so you can move freely and keep warm – cold muscles don't extend properly
- Check machinery regularly. If your equipment works well, it will save you from putting in extra physical effort or improvising technique
- Take more short breaks rather than one long one – use the time to stretch your arms and legs.

