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THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY IS THE PROFESSIONAL
EDUCATIONAL AND TRADE UNION BODY FOR THE UK'S 49,000 CHARTERED
PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, PHYSIOTHERAPY STUDENTS AND SUPPORT WORKERS.
THE SOCIETY HAS OFFICES IN LONDON, EDINBURGH, CARDIFF AND BELFAST.

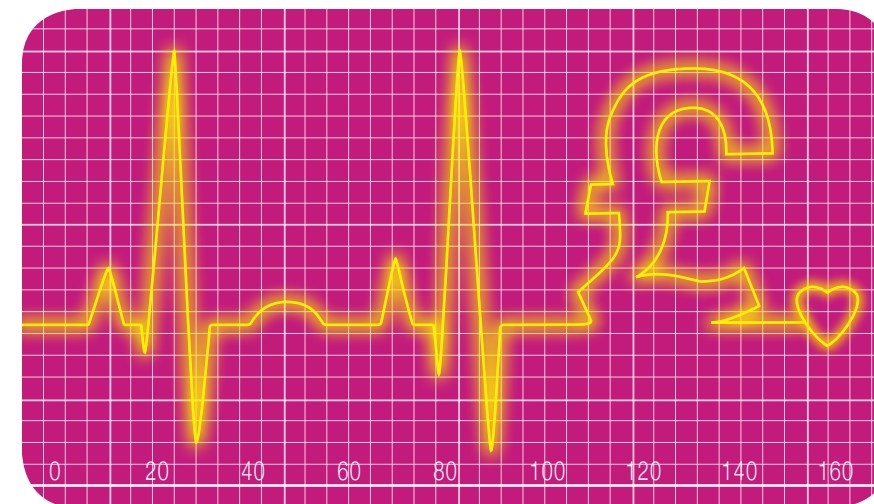
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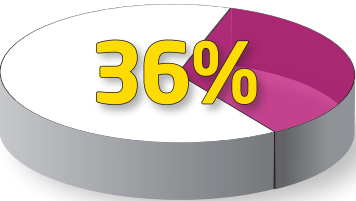
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FITNESS ***PROFITS***

*Physiotherapy advice to help keep
your staff healthy and improve productivity*



THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY



36% OF EMPLOYEES REGULARLY WORK THROUGH LUNCH

Poor work habits are bad for business

A certain level of pressure at work is normal. However, when the pressure regularly exceeds a person's ability to cope and they end up not taking breaks and feeling overloaded it is likely to lead to reduced productivity and time off work due to MSDs and stress.

A recent UK-wide survey⁵ of over 2000 employees by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) revealed some worrying trends and habits. Thirty-six per cent of employees work through their lunch break and 25% take no breaks at all during the day on a regular basis (at least

twice a week). Nearly a third of workers (31%) experience physical pain at work at least once a week with back pain reported as the most common physical problem (65%) followed by shoulder pain (37%) and neck pain (37%).

Physiotherapists are worried that nearly a third (30%) of staff do not report feeling physical pain caused by work because they believe their manager would be unsympathetic. A quarter (25%) go to work when feeling unwell because they fear they will be sacked or made redundant if they take time off sick.

What are musculoskeletal disorders?

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) refer to a group of conditions characterised by pain and a loss of physical function in the body. MSDs cover a wide range of symptoms and may include lower back pain, joint injuries, muscular aches and strains and non-specific arm pain (a term for some types of pain found in the fingers and/or wrists, forearms, neck and shoulders, previously commonly called RSI). MSDs are common health problems with 60% of the adult population

suffering from them at some time; once present, they may recur. MSDs may be brought on by awkward postures, repeated, sustained or forceful activities or by accidents. Whatever the cause, physiotherapists have the knowledge, skills and experience to treat these problems and prevent recurrence through a whole-person approach. That is, one which considers not only physical factors but also psychological and social issues that might be

causing or worsening the person's condition. Physiotherapy can also help to prevent MSDs occurring in the first place. Early intervention with physiotherapy is particularly effective in preventing an MSD becoming a serious long term problem. If left untreated, MSDs can result in severe difficulties. These include problems with manual handling tasks or walking due to lower back pain, or being unable to type due to wrist and hand pain.

Employee ill-health and sickness absence is a major drain on the UK's productivity. Research by the CBI suggests that the average annual cost of sickness absence to business is about £517 per employee. Indirect costs, such as lower customer satisfaction, add another £263 per employee per year.¹

- as an employer, do you know what your sickness absence rates are and what it costs you?
- do you know the reasons why your staff are off sick?
- are you aware of any trends in sickness absence?
- do you know how much it costs you in reduced productivity if your staff come into work when they are unwell?

In tough economic times, businesses and organisations of all sizes need to be resilient to survive and prosper, with staff performing at their best and with costs, such as sickness absence, reduced. Many employers have successfully tackled the problem of sickness absence, resulting in substantial benefits for their business. There is a wealth of free or low cost advice available so take action now – you can't afford not to.

The physiotherapy advice in this leaflet will help you, as an employer or manager, keep your staff safe, healthy and performing optimally.

THERE IS CONSISTENT EVIDENCE THAT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES REDUCE SICKNESS ABSENCE AND IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

- Physiotherapists can help to:
- prevent people going off work in the first place
 - get people back to work on full normal duties
 - facilitate a managed return to work if alternative or modified duties are required
 - deliver a cost effective service for employers.

Sickness costs

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as back pain, are one of the biggest causes of sickness absence on any given day and account for nearly a third of the total time taken off sick from work.²

Yet they are also easy to address with low cost and effective physiotherapy interventions. Each person with a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD) takes an estimated 17.2 days off work on average.²

MSDs are estimated to cost society and employers around £7.4 billion a year. In addition, employers lose as much as £15 billion a year through 'presenteeism', when staff are at work but are unwell and not performing to their full potential.^{3, 4}

Employers may also be subject to compensation claims from sick or injured staff. Managers and employers need to be aware what is happening in their organisation by encouraging staff to report problems in confidence and by monitoring and understanding sickness absence.

They can then take positive action to reduce the costs of ill-health such as reduced productivity, sick pay, turnover and temporary staff.

Legal responsibility

Employers have a legal responsibility to protect the health and safety of their staff and other people, such as customers and members of the public, who may be affected by their work.

In general, employers must:

- make the workplace safe and eliminate or control risks to health
- ensure plant and machinery are safe and that safe systems of work are set and followed
- ensure articles and substances are moved, stored and used safely
- provide adequate welfare facilities
- give workers the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary for their health and safety
- consult workers on health and safety matters.

Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions. Free, easy to follow advice is available from the Health and Safety Executive on reducing risk, including how to carry out risk assessments and on manual handling techniques.
www.hse.gov.uk

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive statement of legislation relating to health and safety in the workplace in the UK. For full details please contact the HSE www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm

Many employers do of course take a positive interest in the health of their staff. Encouragingly, when CSP surveyed managers and employers⁶, 69% of small-medium enterprises (SMEs) said they feel it is important for their staff's health that they have a break at lunchtime.

SME managers/employers also appear to accept the business case for investing in health and well-being initiatives with 56% saying they believe they give a good return. However, 63% of SMEs do not provide occupational health services such as physiotherapy.

63% OF SMES DO NOT PROVIDE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES SUCH AS PHYSIOTHERAPY

Sickness absence – on the increase?

Continuing economic pressure may well result in an escalation of unhealthy work practices, such as not taking breaks. Health and Safety Executive figures show that MSDs are more common amongst older workers.² By 2024 nearly 50% of the adult population will be 50 plus.⁷ An ageing population and an increase in the state retirement age means an ageing workforce. All these factors potentially mean a rise in MSDs.

However, all businesses and organisations – whatever their size and resources – can take action to improve staff health and their business efficiency. This is in the best interests of you as an employer as well as that of your staff.

Better health for better business

Employers that have taken steps to address health and well-being report the following perceived benefits:⁸

- reduced sickness absence, compensation claims and use of temporary staff
- increased productivity
- improved staff retention
- increased employee satisfaction
- improved competitiveness and profitability.

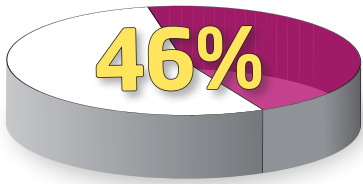
Simple steps you can take at little or no cost include:

- encourage your staff to take breaks away from their work station and get active – 46% per cent of workers in the CSP survey said their physical pains are due to working in the same position for a long time
- aim to create a work culture which supports work-life balance – staff who feel respected and cared for will be more engaged and productive
- train supervisors and managers to understand the risk factors for MSDs so problems get picked up sooner (*see resources section for low cost advice*)
- encourage staff to report problems early and in confidence – the sooner you know a problem exists the more quickly you can tackle it
- provide a staff notice-board where information on healthy eating and exercise (eg free CSP leaflets) together with information on local sports groups, dance

classes, walking groups, weight management classes etc can be displayed

- encourage participation in activity and sports through staff football and softball teams or charitable events such as sponsored walks
- provide flexible working and encourage staff to take responsibility for making healthy choices over diet and exercise – healthier, fit staff will be more resilient and productive
- keep staff informed and provide regular short meetings so they understand their role in the organisation and are more involved and engaged with their work
- 41% of workers in the CSP survey said they would like more open and honest communication – this was the most popular answer when workers were asked what their employer could do to improve work place health.
- working with trade union stewards and safety representatives who have access to information and training is another way in which employers can ensure they are not only meeting their legal obligations but also addressing workplace health issues in a constructive manner.
- make use of the many low cost and free information and advice services available such as, in England, the Health for Work advice line www.health4work.nhs.uk or call 0800 077 88 44.

46% PER CENT OF WORKERS SAID THEIR PHYSICAL PAINS ARE DUE TO WORKING IN THE SAME POSITION FOR A LONG TIME



Success stories

Companies and organisations of all sizes that have addressed staff health and wellness have reaped substantial business benefits:

PricewaterhouseCoopers⁸ found consistent evidence that health and well-being initiatives by 55 UK employers, ranging in size from 70 to 100,000+ employees, resulted in reduced absence rates and improved productivity. One employer experienced a return of £34 for every £1 they invested, in terms of reduced absence rates and improved staff retention by providing in house and discounted physiotherapy for their staff.

Anglian Water have reduced direct absence costs by £289,000 through the use of physiotherapy-based services, with a return on investment of £3 for every £1 spent. In addition, claims for back pain reduced by 50% and ill-health retirement by 90%.

York Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust cut its long term sickness rates by more than 40 per cent through early intervention with physiotherapy and psychotherapy. The number of staff off work for more than four weeks dropped from 99 to 57 and the number of staff off sick for more than three months dropped from 52 to 28. The Trust's return on investment was 2:1.

The Royal Mail's national occupational support and therapy programme, which includes physiotherapy, has had substantial financial benefits with the programme providing a return of approximately £5 for every £1 invested. Absence was cut by 25% over three years and 3,600 employees absent through illness or injury were brought back into work.

Carly – Anglian Water



When office worker Carly's hands started swelling up and the pain made it hard to pick anything up, she immediately reported it to her employer. A physiotherapist goes into her office every Thursday so Carly was able to have her workstation assessed and be given exercises that would help treat her injury. Over the course of three sessions with the physio the swelling went down, which enabled her to work pain-free and to continue playing the saxophone in her spare time.

Paul – Royal Mail



Paul, a postman for 16 years, started experiencing back pain that eventually graduated to severe spasms. His employer put him on a 12-week course which used physiotherapy and included circuit training,

Martin - John Lewis



Martin sustained multiple fractures of his foot, outside of work. Once they were stabilised, he was able to access physiotherapy quickly at work. The combination of physiotherapy treatment, reduced hours and duties as part of a graded return to work plan really helped. As Martin spends a lot of time on his feet on the shop floor, he wouldn't have been able to start back in his usual capacity straight away. Martin reports his company was very supportive and he has now returned to his full hours and duties.

in-depth talks on how the body works, diagnosing problems and pain-management. Paul was able to return to work and his employer has now built in a 15-minute stretch to the start of each shift to maintain the progress he has made.

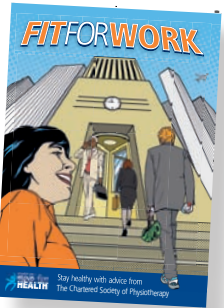
The 'fit' note

The Statement of Fitness for Work, the 'fit note', replaced the 'sick note' in England, Scotland and Wales in April 2010. This gives GPs the option of stating a person 'may be fit for work' and may be able to return to work through, for example, amended duties or altered hours. This has been welcomed by employers with 76% of respondents in a CBI survey saying it would help people get back

to work¹. Physiotherapists can help in this regard by giving specific advice on work capabilities, which helps both employers and employees. Current initiatives on health commissioning give employers and health professionals such as GPs and physiotherapists the opportunity to work together to ensure people who are fit enough to return to work in some capacity are able to do so.

CSP resources

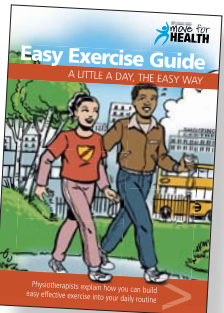
Fit for work →
Simple advice for employees



← **Fit for active work**
Advice for employees in physically demanding or repetitive jobs



Easy exercise guide →
A guide to help build exercise into your day



← **Fit for the future**
Fun advice on diet and exercise for kids



Sickness Costs →
Campaign report 2010



Resources

There is a wide range of practical support and advice available to employers of all sizes across the UK. A number of organisations provide free or low cost services. These include:

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is the professional educational and trade union body for the UK's 49,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers. The Society has offices in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

As part of our Move for Health initiative, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is calling on employers, employees, health professionals and Governments across the UK to work together to address workplace health, and recognise the value of occupational health physiotherapy in the fight against work related ill health.

The CSP has a range of free leaflets (page 7) with advice on ways to keep healthy and active at work and outside of work. Please visit www.csp.org.uk
email: enquiries@csp.org.uk or telephone 020 7306 6666

To find an occupational health physiotherapist visit the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Occupational Health and Ergonomics website www.acpohe.org.uk

You can be referred to a physiotherapist by your GP or contact your local NHS physio department. To find a local private physiotherapist practitioner visit www.physio2u.co.uk

Self-referral is a system for patients to make an appointment direct with their local NHS physiotherapy department, private practice or independent hospital department, without seeing their GP first. Self-referral is readily available throughout the independent sector and private practices and in some, but not all, NHS physiotherapy departments. Ring your local NHS hospital physiotherapy department to find out if self-referral is available in your area.

NHS Plus offers a range of services in England through a network of over 100 NHS Occupational Health businesses, designed to meet the needs of both large and smaller businesses. Visit www.nhsplus.nhs.uk

The Health and Safety Executive offers free and low cost information and advice on keeping your work force healthy and the benefits of doing so – as well as explanations of employers' legal obligations. Visit www.hse.gov.uk

The Department of Work and Pensions offers support and information through the Working for Health initiative that includes the free Occupational Health Advice Line for small businesses and GPs in England, Scotland and Wales; and the free Workplace Well-being tool through which employers can get support on a variety of health and well-being measures. Visit www.workingforhealth.gov.uk

Business Link provides free advice and support service for SMEs, available online and through local advisers. Visit www.businesslink.gov.uk
Business Link Helpline: **0845 600 9006**

Business in the Community is a charity providing free and low cost information and advice including the Business Action on Health campaign led by business for business. Visit www.bitc.org.uk/workplace/health_and_wellbeing/index.html

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) offers factsheets, tools, resources, books and courses on health and safety at work. Visit www.cipd.co.uk

The Confederation of British Industry provides information and conferences on workplace health. Visit www.cbi.org.uk

Institution of Occupational Safety and Health: the Chartered body for health and safety professionals. Visit www.iosh.co.uk

Wales

In Wales, a number of initiatives from **the Welsh Assembly Government** address workplace health, including the Small Workplace Health Awards and extensive resources on their Health at Work website. Visit <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/improvement>

Scotland

The Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives is part of NHS Health Scotland and is funded by the Scottish Government. Through this initiative, a network of advisers work, mainly with SMEs, to improve health, safety, welfare and employment outcomes within Scottish business. Visit www.hse.gov.uk/scotland/schwl.htm

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, **the Working for Health strategy**, together with numerous partner organisations, seeks to raise the profile of health in the workplace and is promoting good practice on workplace issues through regular conferences and NI Workplace Health network events. Visit www.workingforhealthni.gov.uk/index.aspx

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