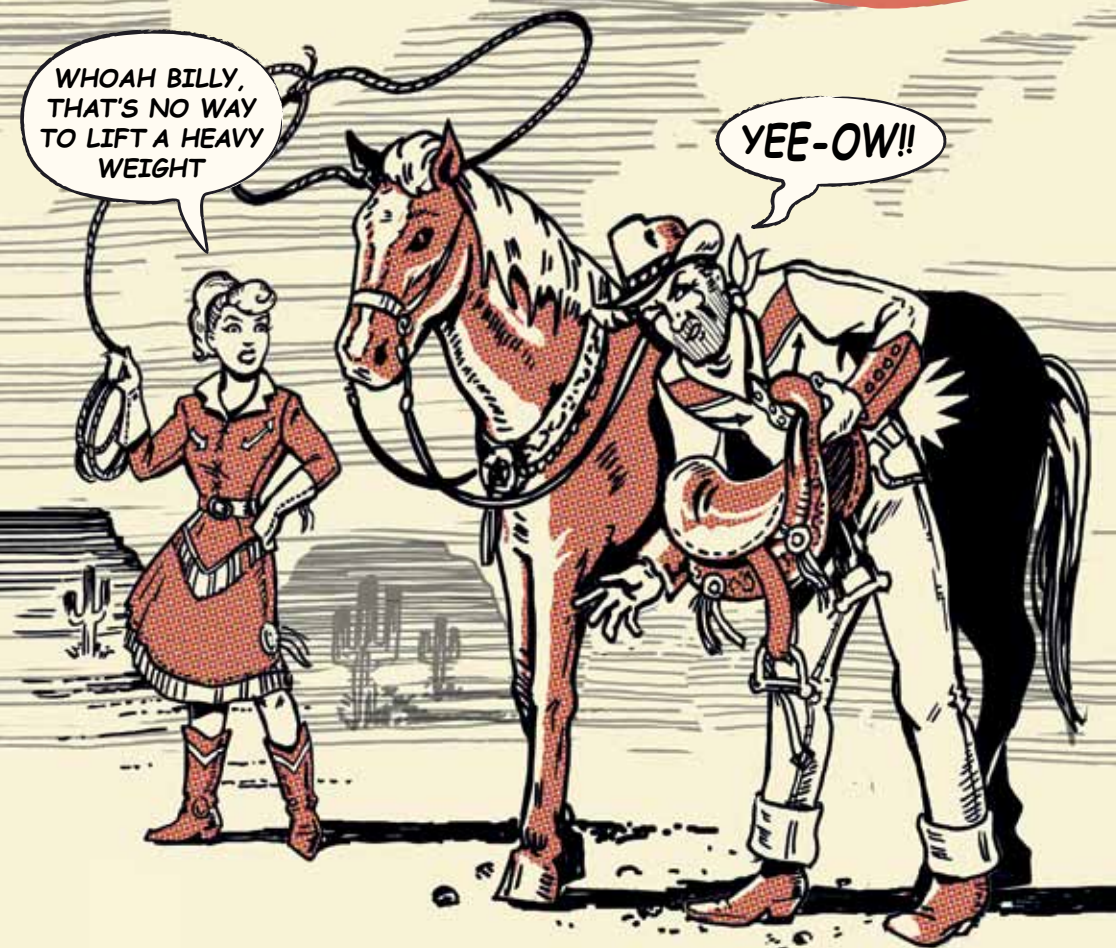


Fit for **ACTIVE WORK!**

TOP TIPS



Stay healthy and happy at work with advice from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

This leaflet has been compiled with the help of chartered physiotherapists specialising in occupational health and ergonomics. The illustrations feature fictional characters but the demands their active jobs place on their bodies are very real! Millions of people across the UK have physically demanding or repetitive jobs. If you're one of them, this leaflet explains how to improve your health while doing your active or manual work and reduce your risk of injury.

ACTIVE WORK IS GOOD FOR YOU

What we do to earn a living can have a positive impact on our physical and mental wellbeing.

The idea that manual handling or repetitive movement is 'bad for you' is a myth. But it is true that active work, if approached incorrectly, can sometimes contribute to health

conditions like musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) such as lower back pain, joint injuries muscular aches and strains and non-specific arm pain – which is a commonly used term for some types of pain felt in the fingers, wrists, forearms, neck and shoulders.

REPETITIVE WORK CAN CONTRIBUTE TO STRAIN, EVEN FOR THE ALIEN ROBOT FORCE! CHECK YOUR POSTURE AND TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS!



PHYSICAL BENEFITS

If your job involves a regular amount of activity like bending, lifting, stretching and pushing, the good news is that it affords you an excellent chance to take charge of your physical health. Frequent physical activity improves your overall health and fitness and will help you get the most from work and your life in general.

Just doing your job can help you meet the recommended target for exercise. Physiotherapists suggest you take 30 minutes of physical activity on at least five days each week. Exercise can be broken down to 10 or 15 minute chunks, if this suits you better. Simply make sure you:

- > Warm up a little, to prepare your body for heavy or repetitive work. You should aim to do this at the beginning of the day and after rest periods
- > Use good technique. Request tailored training for the tasks you do and follow the advice you're given
- > Use any tools provided to help you do your job correctly. Think about top athletes. If a tennis player held her racquet wrongly or a golfer didn't swing his club properly, they would soon develop aches and pains
- > Rotate repetitive activities and remember to take your rest periods, or have 'micro breaks' regularly
- > Consider seeking advice from a physio about specific exercises that will help you develop the strength you need to do your job safely and most effectively
- > Adopt neutral work postures as much as possible – stand upright, maintain the natural curves of your back, keep your arms close to your body and your feet hip distance apart
- > Strengthen your muscles and improve your fitness so you can manage the demands of your job more easily. You'll find you have more energy to enjoy leisure time with friends and family
- > Follow your employer's health and safety procedures – they are there for a good reason
- > Eat well and drink enough fluids
- > Report any symptoms to your

PIECES OF EIGHT -
TAKE A MICRO-BREAK
AFTER HEAVY WORK!

MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS

Active employment can also benefit your mental wellbeing. Being physically active causes your body to release chemicals which help lift your mood and encourage you to feel more relaxed. These simple suggestions can help keep your stress levels in check:

- > Breathe properly. If you feel stressed or anxious, try taking a few deep breaths. You'll feel calmer and more in control
- > Look for the positives in and around your working environment. Get outside and enjoy some fresh air during breaks. If you work outdoors, enjoy a change of

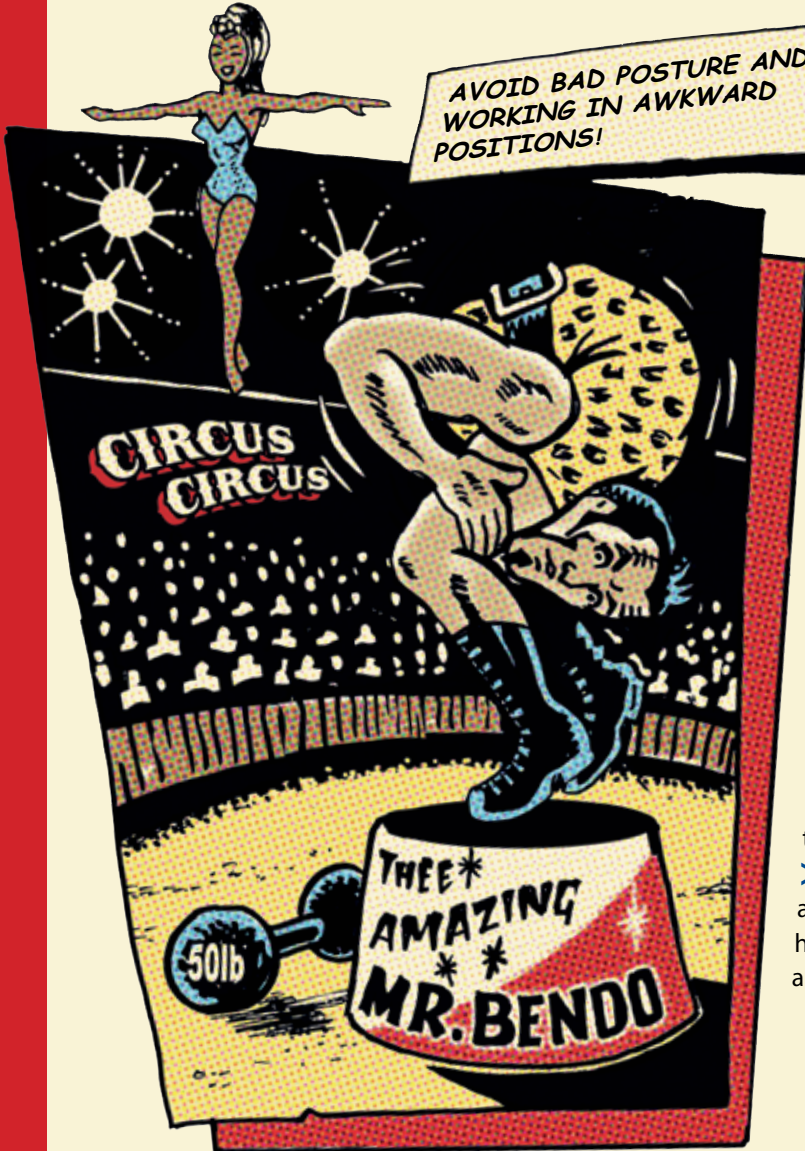
scene. If your workplace feels gloomy, put in a suggestion for a fresh

coat of paint or better lighting

- > Try to keep challenging situations in perspective. Learn to celebrate your success rather than give yourself a hard time about what you haven't achieved

- > Make getting a good night's sleep a priority. If you're not doing shift work, aim to go to bed and get up at the same time on most days
- > Use your holiday allowance. It will help you unwind and recharge.

AVOID BAD POSTURE AND WORKING IN AWKWARD POSITIONS!



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

There is much you can do to look after yourself in the course of your active work...

Physiotherapists recommend you think carefully about the movements your job requires you to carry out regularly. You should try to eliminate movements that are not benefiting your health and might be limiting your productivity.

Movements you should look to avoid include:

- > Awkward or uncomfortable positions (e.g. working with arms away from your body, or with your back bent and twisted)
- > Using too much force
- > Placing too much strain on one side of your body.

You can achieve this through developing better working postures.

GOOD POSTURE

Correct posture and transfer of your body weight in movement is really important for good health and it's something physiotherapists can work with you to help you achieve. If you adopt the correct postures for the tasks you do at work

and at home, your back, neck and other joints will remain healthy and strong, you'll breathe freely, reduce your risk of developing problems and your internal organs will be able to work more efficiently.

Poor posture is often the result of bad habits developed over a lifetime, such as slouching, but can also result from:

- > Obesity
- > Stress and anxiety
- > Fatigue
- > Poor lifting and handling technique.

In a good posture, your spine, shoulder and hip joints will all be in correct alignment. You should aim to keep your feet hip distance apart and your arms close to your body.

Viewed from the back, your spine would appear straight. From the side, it would have three natural curves, similar to the letter 'S'. Whether you are standing, sitting or leaning you should aim to avoid undue stress and strain on your joints. This will help you feel:

- > Stronger
- > Less tired
- > Fewer aches and pains.

HELP FROM YOUR EMPLOYER

Remember also, that all employers have legal obligations to provide safe and healthy workplaces for active workers. They should provide:

- > Information and training about safe ways to work
- > Risk assessments conducted by trained assessors to minimise hazards
- > Changes to work environment and

work style as far as is practical

- > Safe equipment to assist you in your duties
- > Encouragement for staff to take allocated breaks and leave work on time
- > Physios suggest employers consider basic 'health promotion in the workplace' tips. This might include advice or information about walk or cycle to work schemes and free or discounted access to exercise facilities.

'Move for Health' campaign

As part of our Move for Health campaign, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is calling on employers and Governments across the UK to recognise the value of occupational physiotherapy in the fight against work-relevant ill-health.

You can find out more about the campaign at www.csp.org.uk/moveforhealth

Physiotherapy: keeping you fit for work

Recovery: Physiotherapists are experts in rehabilitation, helping people return to their normal activities after illness and injury. If you're suffering from health problems that seem to be aggravated

at work, physios can help! They will work with you to create a plan to help you get fit and healthy. This includes tackling risk factors in your job and general lifestyle that may be causing or contributing to problems with your health.

Prevention: Physiotherapists also know that prevention is always better than cure. Following the advice in this leaflet can help you reduce the risk of health problems occurring at all.

You can be referred to a physiotherapist by your GP, or contact your local NHS physio department. To find your local private physiotherapy practitioner visit www.physio2u.co.uk To find an occupational health physiotherapist, visit the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Occupational Health and Ergonomics website www.acpohe.org.uk

This document can be made available in a format for people with sight problems

Tel: 020 7306 6666

in association with



Web www.csp.org.uk Email enquiries@csp.org.uk
14 Bedford Row London WC1R 4ED Tel +44 (0)20 7306 6666

THE CHARTERED SOCIETY OF PHYSIOTHERAPY is the professional, educational and trade union body for the United Kingdom's 50,000 chartered physiotherapists, physiotherapy students and support workers.