



# Give your wrist a rest...

The possibility that you could end up living your life in intolerable and crippling pain, permanently disabled, unable to hold a newspaper, dress yourself or brush your teeth is not something you are likely to have considered working in AXA. However, today your actions at work could well have brought that possibility one step closer for yourself. This week is RSI Awareness week and Amicus will be raising the profile of this debilitating condition and what you within AXA should be doing to ensure it doesn't ruin your life...

RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) is a progressive condition that begins with mild pain or weariness of the hands, wrists and arms. Within an office environment such as AXA, the most likely cause of RSI is prolonged VDU use. Untreated it can become very serious and result in permanent damage to you hands, wrist or arms.

Symptoms of RSI can include tenderness and pain in the neck, shoulder, upper back, upper arm, elbow, forearm wrist or fingers, swelling of hands or forearms, tingling, numbness, stabbing, dull or aching pains, cold sensations, stiffness, burning in fingers, wrists, elbows or arms, decreased sensitivity, motor control, endurance or strength or fingers, hands wrists or elbows suddenly locking up or freezing.

If you suffer from any symptoms like these, do not ignore them, as eventually they could become persistent and very painful. Often people do not recognise the symptoms for what they are until acute and debilitating pain is experienced.

RSI in the workplace can be caused by prolonged use of your VDU and it is important that you take the recommended break away from display screen equipment work of five minutes every hour. It is not sensible to 'bank' breaks and take 15 minutes every three hours as this defeats the benefit of short frequent breaks. These breaks are not work breaks, however, and should consist of non-screen based work. Whilst it can be awkward to manage these breaks in call centre type environments, it is important they are included in the work pattern as part of the employer's duty of care for staff.

Posture and positioning of equipment are two other equally important considerations. Sitting in one position for a long period of time is not natural and it is essential that you sit in a correct position when working on a VDU. AXA's *KeepFit* programme and *Working Safely: Display Screen Equipment Guide* illustrate what you should do. It is important to check your workstation every time if you "hot desk" or you sit down just in case someone else has used it and adjusted it for their own use. Whilst this might seem a pain to do, better a minute spent adjusting your workstation than years of real pain in your back, arms, wrists or fingers!



## Find out more...

Amicus union reps across AXA will be running events over this week and answering your questions about RSI and advising what can be done to deal with any concerns you have, as well as handing out some goodies!

RSI Awareness events are being staged at:

- Bolton** – 21<sup>st</sup> February
- Bristol** – 20<sup>th</sup> February
- Coventry** – 19<sup>th</sup> February
- Ipswich** – 22<sup>nd</sup> February
- Morecambe** – 21<sup>st</sup> February

Other sites will also be raising the issue on a local basis and you should approach your local workplace rep with any questions or concerns you may have.