



# ▶ Display Screen Equipment (Working with Computers and Laptops)

## ▶ Introduction

This information sheet gives employers practical advice on using display screen equipment safely and how to identify and minimise risk.

In most workplaces there are employees that spend a significant amount of time at a computer workstation. The workstation includes the screen, keyboard, mouse, desk or work surface, chair and surrounding area. These employees may be exposed to risks that could lead to temporary eye strain, tiredness or pain in the hands, arms or back.

Addressing these potential risks can reduce employee sick days and help employees to do their work better as they will be less likely to have symptoms such as tiredness and pain.

## ▶ When do the Display Screen Equipment Regulations apply?

- ▶ If the employee has no choice but to work at a computer workstation
- ▶ If the employee normally uses the computer workstation for continuous periods of more than one hour
- ▶ If the computer workstation is generally used by the employee

## ▶ Do I need to conduct a computer workstation risk assessment?

Yes, computer workstations must be assessed to identify possible risks that may lead to eyesight problems or physical difficulties.

## ▶ Case study on a computer workstation

As a first step you should consult with the employee at the workstation to collect information on the work they do there.

Let the employee comment during the course of the assessment.

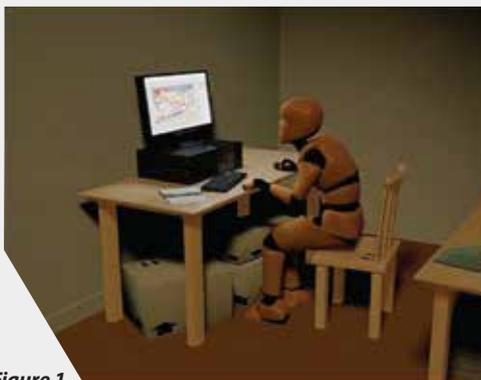


Figure 1

**Figure 1** shows an example of a poor computer workstation setup.

**Figure 2** shows a list of issues to be addressed. These must be written down.

**Figures 3, 4 and 5** show a computer workstation that has been assessed and has had improvements put in place, including adjusting the monitor to the correct height, improving the lighting and providing an adjustable seat, document holder, and footrest.

# ▶ Display Screen Equipment

You will need to revisit the workstation if there were issues to be addressed. Consult with the employee and check that the issues highlighted in the risk assessment form have been addressed. When everything is satisfactory, you and the employee should sign off on the risk assessment form.

## ▶ Is it acceptable to allow employees to assess their own workstation?

No, employees can be involved in the risk assessment of their own workstations, but it is not enough to have employees use a self-appraisal worksheet or a software package to assess their own workstations. As an employer, you must be actively engaged in completing a physical risk assessment of individual workstations.



Figure 2

## ▶ Do I need to provide an eye and eyesight test?

You must inform employees that they are entitled to have an appropriate eye and eyesight test, which must be paid for by you, the employer. Where an eye test reveals that a particular lens is required for working at a computer workstation, you must pay for the minimum requirement frames and lenses. Employees have the right to an eye and eyesight test before taking up work at a computer workstation as well as at regular intervals, for example every three years.



Figure 3

## ▶ Do the Display Screen Equipment Regulations apply to laptops?

No, under these regulations the keyboard must be tiltable and separate from the screen so as to allow staff to find a comfortable working position that avoids fatigue in the arms or hands. A laptop does not have a separate keyboard.



Figure 4

## ▶ What is recommended for laptops?

Employees should not work at a laptop directly for long periods of time.

It is recommended that the laptop be connected to a separate monitor and keyboard. The workstation can then be assessed.

## ▶ How often should employees take a break from working at a computer workstation?

Work at computer workstations should be interrupted periodically by breaks or changes in activity. Try to make sure that a single continuous period of work at a screen does not exceed one hour.

The flow of work should be designed to allow natural breaks to occur. It is important to note:

- ▶ Rest breaks or changes in the pattern of work should be taken before fatigue sets in
- ▶ The employee should not sit in the same position for long periods and should make sure to change posture as often as practicable
- ▶ Short, frequent rest breaks are better than longer breaks taken occasionally



Figure 5