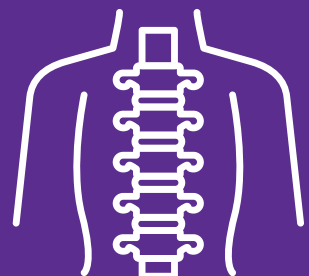


GOOD WORK

Norfolk

GUIDE 8

Supporting Employees with Musculoskeletal Conditions

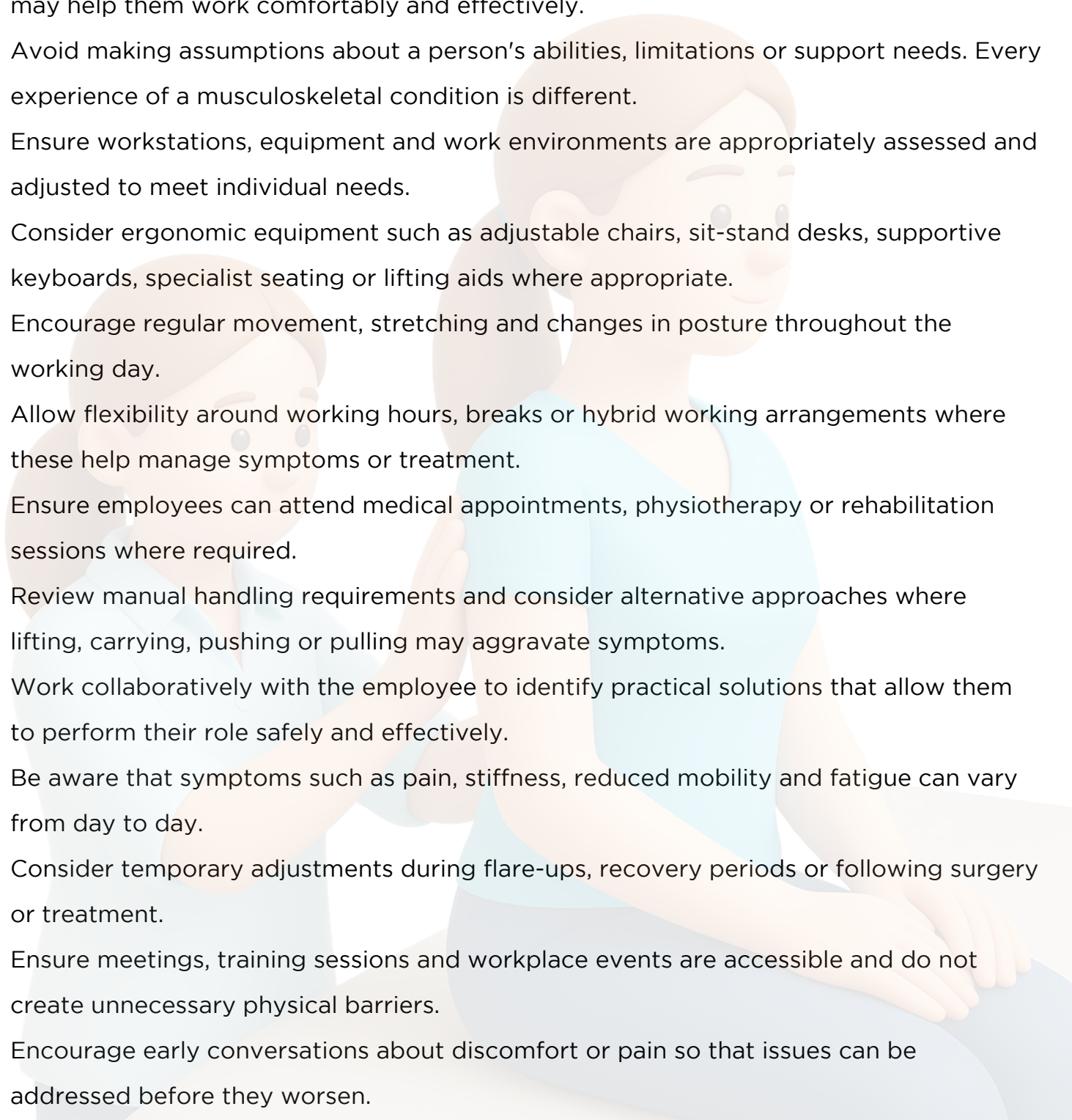


Removing barriers and helping people develop their potential

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions affect the muscles, bones, joints, tendons, ligaments and connective tissues. They can include back pain, arthritis, neck and shoulder problems, repetitive strain injuries (RSI), joint conditions, chronic pain and other mobility-related conditions. Musculoskeletal conditions are common and can affect people of all ages. While some conditions are temporary, others may be long-term or fluctuate over time. With appropriate support and workplace adjustments, many people with musculoskeletal conditions can continue to work successfully and achieve their full potential.



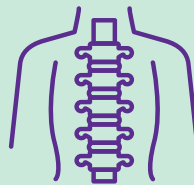
How Employers Can Help

- 
- An illustration of two people. A person with short brown hair, wearing a light blue shirt, is standing and leaning forward, supporting the arm of another person. The second person has long brown hair, is wearing a light blue top and grey trousers, and is sitting on a grey surface. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.
- Speak to the employee about how their condition affects them and what adjustments may help them work comfortably and effectively.
 - Avoid making assumptions about a person's abilities, limitations or support needs. Every experience of a musculoskeletal condition is different.
 - Ensure workstations, equipment and work environments are appropriately assessed and adjusted to meet individual needs.
 - Consider ergonomic equipment such as adjustable chairs, sit-stand desks, supportive keyboards, specialist seating or lifting aids where appropriate.
 - Encourage regular movement, stretching and changes in posture throughout the working day.
 - Allow flexibility around working hours, breaks or hybrid working arrangements where these help manage symptoms or treatment.
 - Ensure employees can attend medical appointments, physiotherapy or rehabilitation sessions where required.
 - Review manual handling requirements and consider alternative approaches where lifting, carrying, pushing or pulling may aggravate symptoms.
 - Work collaboratively with the employee to identify practical solutions that allow them to perform their role safely and effectively.
 - Be aware that symptoms such as pain, stiffness, reduced mobility and fatigue can vary from day to day.
 - Consider temporary adjustments during flare-ups, recovery periods or following surgery or treatment.
 - Ensure meetings, training sessions and workplace events are accessible and do not create unnecessary physical barriers.
 - Encourage early conversations about discomfort or pain so that issues can be addressed before they worsen.
 - Focus on what the employee can do rather than on perceived limitations.
 - Regularly review adjustments to ensure they remain effective as circumstances change.

Common Workplace Considerations

An employee with a musculoskeletal condition may benefit from support relating to:

- Sitting, standing, or maintaining one position for prolonged periods.
- Manual handling or physically demanding tasks.
- Repetitive movements or repetitive strain activities.
- Workstation setup and ergonomics.
- Mobility around the workplace.
- Fatigue, pain, or discomfort management.
- Driving or travelling for work.
- Recovery from surgery, injury, or treatment.
- Flexible working arrangements.
- Access to suitable equipment and workplace adjustments.
- Not everyone will experience the same challenges, and many employees may only require simple adjustments to work comfortably and effectively.



Key principle

Not everyone will experience the same challenges, and many employees may only require simple adjustments to work comfortably and effectively.

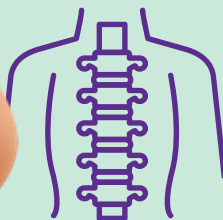
Examples of Musculoskeletal Conditions

Back Pain and Spinal Conditions

- May benefit from ergonomic seating, sit-stand desks and opportunities to change position regularly.
- Manual handling tasks may need to be adapted or supported with equipment.
- Flexible working arrangements may help during flare-ups or treatment.
- Encourage movement and stretching rather than prolonged sitting.

Arthritis and Joint Conditions

- Symptoms can vary depending on pain, stiffness, swelling and fatigue levels.
- Employees may benefit from flexible start times, adapted equipment or reduced repetitive tasks.
- Consider workplace accessibility, particularly where mobility may be affected.
- Allow additional time for tasks during periods when symptoms are more severe.



Key principle

Early conversations, practical adjustments and a flexible approach can make a significant difference. The most effective solutions are developed in partnership with the employee and focus on removing barriers rather than limiting opportunity.

Examples of Musculoskeletal Conditions

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

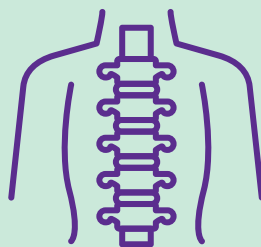
- Review workstation setup, equipment and working practices.
- Encourage regular breaks from repetitive activities.
- Consider voice-recognition software, ergonomic keyboards or alternative working methods.
- Help employees vary tasks to reduce sustained repetitive movements.

Chronic Pain Conditions

- Recognise that pain may not always be visible and can fluctuate significantly.
- Support pacing strategies that help employees manage their workload and energy levels.
- Avoid assumptions about capability based solely on appearance.
- Flexible working and regular breaks may help maintain productivity and wellbeing.

Mobility-Related Conditions

- Ensure workplaces, entrances, meeting rooms and facilities are accessible.
- Consider travel requirements and workplace layouts.
- Provide suitable parking, seating and accessible facilities where required.
- Discuss any equipment or support that may improve safety and independence.



Key principle

Musculoskeletal conditions are often manageable when employers focus on prevention, early intervention, ergonomic support and open communication. Small adjustments can have a significant impact on comfort, confidence, attendance and productivity.