



spotlight on health

Eyes And The Workplace: Preventing Computer Vision Syndrome

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(NAPS)—In today's digital society, 75 million Americans work at a computer for three hours or more each day. Because vision is the main motor skill involved in using a computer, that means 150 million tired eyes.

A survey of optometrists, conducted by the American Optometric Association, shows that 70 to 75 percent of computer users report eye and vision problems as their most frequent health-related problem. Symptoms such as headaches, blurry vision, sore and tired eyes, and neck and back pain from extensive computer use have been collectively called Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS).

While other factors may contribute to CVS, the first step for people who work on computers is to get a professional eye exam. Especially with today's smaller mobile computer devices, such as laptops, handheld devices and cell phones, computer use has become even more visually demanding.

It is important to tell your eye doctor that you use a computer daily. He or she needs to know if you experience symptoms of CVS. This all helps in providing a correct eye diagnosis.

The eye faces many challenges when someone works on a computer. It must constantly refocus between what is being typed and the computer screen. In addition, we tend to blink less while staring intently at the computer screen. The unusual contrast of a computer screen also can create subtle focusing problems for the eye.

When you go for an eye exam, give a detailed history of your symptoms, how you use a computer and the amount of time, the position you sit in and the distance from the computer screen.

Another important point to remember is the layout of your workspace, such as lighting, glare and ergonomic arrangement.

Eyeglasses are the simplest solution for CVS. Progressive lenses, such as Varilux® Panamic® lenses, provide comfortable, continuous vision at all distances for the 40-plus age group with presbyopia. Progressive lenses provide the best solution because they allow people to see clearly at any distance and angle. In addition, lenses treated with anti-reflective coating such as Crizal® can cut the glare from other sources that hinder seeing the computer screen clearly.

Even in minor cases of computer-related vision problems, current eyeglass lenses can help reduce eye fatigue, maintain good eyesight longer and, in turn, take care of the symptoms of CVS.

Maintaining an appropriate office environment is also important for preventing CVS. Some suggestions for maximizing your office space to maintain good eyesight include:

- Take short eye breaks by glancing around the room or looking at a window. The goal is not to focus on an object for a long period of time.
- Be aware of blinking and purposefully blink more while you work on a computer. Blinking lubricates the eye and prevents dryness.
- Position your monitor directly in front of you. Set monitor height so the top of the screen is approximately at forehead level. For large monitors (19 to 21 inches), keep the top of the document you are working on at about forehead level.
- Keep reference documents you are typing as close to the computer screen as possible. This reduces the amount of refocusing the eye must do from screen to document.
- Reduce glare from windows with blinds and position your

computer screen to reduce glare from overhead lights and task lighting. Limit reflections by removing reflective objects from your work area.

One thing to remember is that changing your office layout will only be a temporary solution if your eyesight is the real culprit. A professional eye exam will not only pick up symptoms of CVS, but it can also catch more serious problems, such as near-sightedness, far-sightedness, astigmatism and presbyopia.

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