

# Wellness @Work

Spring 2010

## Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS)

If you notice workers straining to see the computer screen—or rubbing their eyes with irritation—it could be happening to them. CVS encompasses a slew of eyestrain and pain problems from staring at the computer for too long.



**Why does this happen?** The muscles in the eye are constantly challenged when working on a computer versus a book or paper because the screen also adds elements of contrast, flicker, and glare.

Unfortunately, computer eye problems are more common than you may think. Between 50% and 90% of people who work at a computer screen have at least some symptoms of CVS.

Although experts say CVS

will not cause long-term damage to the eye, the irritation can hinder productivity.

Encourage employees to get their eyes checked by a doctor if they are experiencing problems on a regular basis. They may need glasses or a new prescription.

Help employees reduce their risk of CVS with the following tips:

**Cut down the glare.** To reduce glare on your computer screen, change the lighting. Try a desk lamp with a moveable shade that distributes light evenly over your desk. Or, try a glare filter over your monitor.

**Organize your desk.** Keep the computer screen about 20 to 28 inches away from your face to avoid stretching your neck or straining your eyes.

**Give eyes a break.** Look away from the screen every 20 minutes or so to rest your eyes, and blink often to keep your eyes moist. If your eyes are getting overly dry, try using eye drops.

- CVS Symptoms:**
- ✓ Blurred vision
  - ✓ Double vision
  - ✓ Dry, red eyes
  - ✓ Eye irritation
  - ✓ Headaches
  - ✓ Neck or back pain

**Change your settings.** Adjust the brightness, contrast, and font size until you find the best setting for your vision.

**More Information...** You can rely on MED-1 to provide more information on preventing injuries and illness in your work environments because we see your employees every day and know how important health and safety is to you.

To find more tips and to download useful resources on eye safety, visit the American Optometric Association at [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org). Or contact Tammie Milligan at 616-459-1570 or [tmilligan@med1services.com](mailto:tmilligan@med1services.com)

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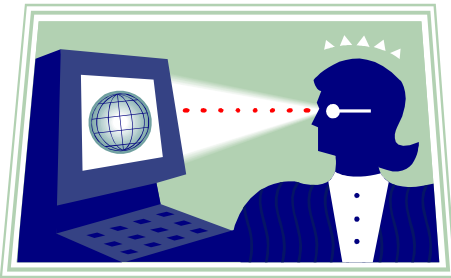
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## Encourage Eye Health for Computer Users

Roughly 10 million people visit eye doctors every year for computer-related vision problems. With computers and hand-held devices so commonplace, is “computer vision syndrome” simply a fact of life? Experts say no. Here’s what can be done to alleviate the pain and strain.

According to a recent American Optometric Association survey, nearly three-fourths of computer



users admit they don’t take computer breaks as often as they should, and 10 percent never take breaks. No wonder 50-90% of video display terminal workers suffer from tired, dry eyes, blurred vision, eyestrain, headaches, and sensitivity to light.

In addition to eye discomfort, computer users often suffer neck and shoulder problems, especially bifocal wearers, who adopt awkward positions to see their screens clearly. Visually fatiguing work may result in lowered productivity, increased error rate, and reduced job satisfaction. Taking these steps could reduce the potential for development of workplace related ocular discomfort.

Here are steps your employees can take to prevent these problems from happening in the first place:

### Check eyes regularly.

Farsightedness, astigmatism, presbyopia, and binocular vision (eye coordination and eye focusing) problems can contribute to CVS. An eye specialist—either an optometrist or ophthalmologist—can recommend measures to reduce eyestrain, such as special computer glasses or a screen filter.

### Blink early and often.

Concentration tends to reduce the rate of blinking, leading to dry eyes. The normal blink rate is 16-20 times per minute, but when working at a computer screen your blink rate decreases to 6-8 times a minute. Experts suggest the 20/20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away from the screen or close your eyes for at least 20 seconds.

### Lessen lighting.

The brighter the lighting, the greater the eye irritation. You can reduce the amount of lighting by using a smaller desk light instead of a bright overhead light.



### Reduce glare.

Position computer screens so windows are not in your working field of view.

### Evaluate the ergonomics.

Viewing distances and angles used for computer work differ from those commonly used for other reading or writing tasks.

Stress on the eye muscles is reduced as the gaze moves downward so the top of the screen should be below your horizontal eye level and tilted slightly away from you at the bottom.

These few simple measures can increase employees’ vision and comfort immeasurably—and reduce the pain and strain of computer vision syndrome.

For more information regarding computer displays and eye health, visit the American Optometric Association at [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).

Portions of this article were provided by - [www.corporatewellnessadvisor.com](http://www.corporatewellnessadvisor.com).



Wellness at Work is a informational publication provided by MED-1 Occupational Health System to facilitate health and wellness initiatives for employees.

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