

## Is staring at the computer giving you tired eyes? You're not alone.



Earlier this year, Nielsen reported that Americans spend an average of 11 hours per day with electronic media. And while those experiences keep us entertained, informed and connected, they're also an assault on our eyes.

As you probably know, a long day staring at a computer screen can sometimes lead to tired eyes and headaches. But did you know these issues could also be signs of Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS)? According to the American Optometric Association, studies show that 41 percent of Americans say they've experienced eye strain, and 45 percent cited neck or back pain after prolonged use of a computer or handheld mobile device. <sup>1</sup> With computers dominating our work and home lives, computer-related vision problems are increasing.

Besides tired eyes and headaches, other symptoms of CVS include double vision, eye strain and sometimes even neck and shoulder aches. The reason is that our eyes have a harder time focusing on characters on a computer screen. Unlike printed type, computer characters are brightest at the center and lighter on the edges. The eyes jump around as they try to focus, making them tired and affecting other areas of the upper body. <sup>2</sup>

Fortunately, the effects of CVS are neither permanent nor damaging to the eye. Still, symptoms of CVS can be uncomfortable and can reduce productivity by as much as 20

percent. <sup>3</sup> According to the American Optometric Association, about 10 million eye exams performed annually in the United States are prompted by vision problems from computer use. <sup>4</sup> However, you can help combat CVS by following a few simple steps <sup>4</sup> :

- Get an eye exam before starting a job that requires extensive computer use.
- Use a flat-panel monitor or LCD screen that has crisper resolutions.
- Place the monitor at eye level about 20 to 26 inches away from you. Always use the computer in proper light.
- Blink more often to keep your eyes moist.
- Take breaks from your computer to rest your eyes.
- Visit your eye doctor annually to monitor and manage symptoms, unless otherwise recommended by your eye doctor.

For some, CVS symptoms can be relieved by wearing special computer eyewear or by having UV coating on your regular lenses to reduce glare. Talk with your eye doctor to learn about these options. In today's information age, you probably can't avoid spending long hours in front of a computer screen. However, by following a few preventive measures, you can make working on a computer easier on the eyes.

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1. American Optometric Association, "Healthy Vision on the Job is Everyone's Business," 2010.
  2. American Optometric Association, "Vision Discomfort Associated with Computer Vision Syndrome," 2008.
  3. Daum, KM, et al. "Productivity associated with visual status of computer users." *Optometry* (2004) 75:1 pp 1-15.
  4. American Optometric Association, "Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS)," 2011.

Source: The Discovery Eye Foundation, Learning-related vision problems, July 2014.

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