

Reduce Eye Strain and Your Computer



Do you spend a lot of time in front of the computer?

Ever rub your eyes and want to stop working?

You may be experiencing Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), the official diagnosis given to a range of symptoms that include:

- burning
- dry and strained eyes
- headache
- neck ache
- blurred vision

CVS, more commonly known as computer eyestrain, is due to over- or misuse of computer monitors, bad lighting and other environmental and ergonomic factors.

Stubborn, persistent, and regular physical discomfort due to one or more of these symptoms cuts your productivity sharply over time.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has found that 75% of computer users surveyed "reported occasional aching or burning eyes at work," while another "39% reported blurred vision."¹

Take a Break – an Easy Solution

, CVS reportedly poses few long-term problems, but is nevertheless uncomfortable enough to warrant changes in your work or study attitude and inspire some habits that relieve long periods of routine computer use:

1. Take a few minutes away from your computer, better yet your desk each hour.
2. If you can't leave your desk, lean back, close your eyes and relax.
3. Segment auxiliary work tasks; use them to break up otherwise lengthy computer sessions.
4. Quickly revive yourself with a few easy stretches.

The telecommuter with a laptop has the freedom to go outside, create an office out of thin-air, and work from home, in jeans and tee shirt, or pajamas. Even with all this apparent flexibility there should still be the compulsion to include breaks and alternate routines.

Light Your Workspace Properly



There are plenty of situations in which daylight is the best choice for task work. However, direct sunlight and bright indirect light do not make the best companions for computer work. General lighting rules of thumb apply for those who have to look at a computer monitor for hours each day:

5. Overhead lighting and bright light emanating from behind your monitor are tough on the eyes. If you have the option, use table lamps off to either side of your work area. Your monitor throws its own light, so you really only need adequate indirect light around you.
6. If you are close to a sunny window, close or adjust the blinds so light does not fall directly onto your monitor.
7. Avoid working in a dark room. Your monitor will be like a bright beacon in the dark. Your eyes will have to struggle between the extremes of light and dark. If you must work in near dark conditions, try dimming the brightness of your monitor screen. It will allow you to work reasonably comfortably for maybe an hour or so, but at some point your eyes will certainly feel the strain.
8. If you really mean to kick computer eye strain and want to properly light your home or office workspace, shop specifically for high-quality task lights that not only throw a measured degree and quality of light, but also reduce glare.

Get a Humidity Fix: Dry Air = Dry Eyes



There are, of course, other environmental factors that may contribute to symptoms of computer eyestrain. The architectural amalgam of manmade building materials in our home, dorm, and office environment creates an impervious cocoon. Office air is typically dry which can dry out your eyes. Combine this with the fact that "Computer use results in a decrease of blinking to almost one third of normal."² Blinking is the eye's natural recipe for moisture.

9. Natural plants in your workspace can increase humidity as well as control dust and other irritating particles.³
10. Over the counter natural tear products are useful to relieve dry eyes, a main complaint among heavy computer users.

Get Physical Relief through Ergonomics and Hardware

Office environment may be within your power to change. Fluorescent lighting and white-hued cubicles characterize the typical corporate space. The desktop without a computer monitor is rare.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) develops regulations that govern the safety and comfort of the American worker. Your company must make a reasonable effort to provide you with an ergonomically safe workspace.

For example, wrist supports minimize the risk of carpal tunnel syndrome and desk chairs with lumbar supports reduce back strain, particularly for those employees predisposed to either condition. For the growing population of workers demonstrating debilitating symptoms of computer eyestrain, both at home and in the office, there is a stable of helpful hardware and accessories:

Monitors Matter Most

Consumers have a range of monitor types from which to choose and in a wide price range. There are CRT monitors, flat-screen, wide screen, high definition, LCD and screens in matte and glossy finishes. Each delivers a distinctive visual experience.

OSHA's standards regarding workstation monitors include suggestions for position, angle, settings, and lighting.

