

9 Steps to Reducing Computer Eyestrain

Computer eyestrain is the number one office-related health complaint, but there are many things workers and employers can do to reduce this symptom of computer vision syndrome (CVS). Here are nine easy tips:

1. Get a computer eye exam.

This is the most important thing you can do to prevent or treat computer vision problems. Users should have an eye exam before they start working on a computer and once a year thereafter.

2. Use proper lighting.

Eyestrain is often caused by excessively bright light coming in from outside and excessively bright light inside. When you use a computer, your ambient lighting should be about half that used in most offices. Eliminate exterior light by closing drapes, shades, or blinds. Reduce interior lighting by using fewer light bulbs or fluorescent tubes, or use lower intensity bulbs and tubes. If possible, position your monitor so that windows are to the side of it, instead of in front or back.

3. Minimize glare.

Glare on walls and finished surfaces, as well as reflections on the computer screen itself can also cause eyestrain. You may want to install an anti-glare screen on your monitor and, if possible, paint bright white walls a darker color with a matte finish. Again, cover the windows; when outside light cannot be reduced, use a computer hood. Have an anti-reflective coating applied to your glasses. This will prevent glare and reflections on the back side of your lenses from reaching your eyes.

4. Adjust the brightness of your computer screen.

Closely match the brightness of the environment with that of your computer screen, by using the buttons on the monitor. As a test, try looking at the white background of this web page: if it looks like a light source, it's too bright; if it seems dull and gray, it may be too dark. Also adjust the monitor to make sure the contrast between the screen background and the on-screen characters is high. And make sure that the text size and colour are optimized for the most comfort.

5. Blink more often.

Blinking is very important when working at a computer — it rewets your eyes to avoid dryness and irritation. When working at a computer, people blink less frequently — about five times less than normally, according to studies. Tears coating the eye evaporate more rapidly during long non-blinking phases and cause [dry eyes](#). Office buildings may have excessively dry environments that also reduce tearing.

For significant problems, ask your Optician about artificial tears or eyedrops that you can use during the day. By the way, don't confuse lubricating drops with the drops that only "get the red out." The latter can indeed make your eyes look better with vasoconstrictors that reduce the size of the blood vessels in your eyes, but they are not necessarily formulated to help with dryness and irritation.

Also try this exercise: Every 30 minutes blink 10 times by closing your eyes as if falling asleep (very slowly). This will help rewet your eyes.

6. Exercise and stretch your eyes.

Look away from your computer screen every 30 minutes, and focus for 5-10 seconds on a distant object outside or down the hallway. Another exercise to readjust your focusing is to look far away at an object for 10-15 seconds and then near for 10-15 seconds, rocking your focusing back and forth between near and far. Do this 10 times. Both of these exercises will help you prevent strained near vision and stretch your focusing muscles.

7. Take frequent breaks.

Full-time computer users should take a 10-minute break every hour to reduce eyestrain problems. Part-time users should take frequent breaks after sitting in front of their display for more than a hour. However, if you feel the need to take more breaks, it may be an indication that you are suffering from computer vision syndrome, and you should see an eyecare professional immediately for a computer eye exam.

8. Modify your workstation.

If you need to look back and forth between a printed page and your computer screen, this can cause eyestrain. Place written pages on a copy stand adjacent to the monitor. Properly light the copy stand; you may want to use a desk lamp, but make sure it doesn't shine into your eyes or onto the computer screen. Adjust your workstation and chair to the correct height. Purchase ergonomic furniture to insure proper screen locations and posture.

9. Exercise even when sitting.

Anyone in a sedentary job, especially those using computers, should stand up, move about, or exercise their arms, legs, back, neck, and shoulders frequently. We recommend several sitting, stretching, and joint rotating exercises for computer users.



Position your desk lamp so it doesn't shine on the computer screen or into your eyes.