

Today, it is estimated that about 60% of people who routinely use computers and digital devices experience symptoms of eye strain, or “computer vision syndrome.”

The length time you spend focusing your eyes on one thing, i.e.: computers, fine detail tasks, or driving for long periods without a break can cause eye strain. It can lead to symptoms and conditions such as eye cramping (accommodative spasm) dry eyes, redness, a burning sensation, itchiness, eye twitching, neck pain, and headaches.

Why do screens cause eye strain?

1. Accommodative spasm: When the eye focuses intensely on one object for a long time, this can cause the ciliary muscles inside the eye to cramp up, this makes it difficult to change focus to objects further away. (Not to be confused with myopia or near-sightedness.)
2. Not blinking enough: Normally, humans blink 15-20 times per minute, research has found that people tend to blink less than half as often when they're reading, watching or playing on a screen. Blinking is what spreads tears over your eyes, which keeps them from drying out and becoming irritated.

Signs that you may have eye strain include:

- blurry vision
- dry eyes
- twitching
- Difficulty focusing that comes and goes.
- headaches
- neck and shoulder pain

Steps you can take to reduce eye strain:

- Ensure your computer screen is about 24 inches from your face and about 10-15 degrees below eye level.
- Use proper lighting – make sure you don't have bright lights reflecting off your screen, be cognizant of the location of lamps, lights, and windows.

- Adjust contrast, brightness, and refresh rate of your computer
- Use artificial tears if necessary. (Redness drops don't necessarily help with moisturizing.)
- Consider blue light lenses, or use glare film on your screen.
- Get regular eye exams. See a doctor if discomfort in the eye persists.
- Ensure you don't have drafts around your work area, movement of air can increase dryness.
- Follow the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look at an object at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds.



Photo from: Juststand.org

Eye Exercise

Look at something far away for 10-15 seconds, then gaze as something close up for 10-15 seconds. Then look back at the distant object. Do this 10 ten times.

This exercise reduces the risk of your eyes focusing ability to “lock up” (accommodative spasm) after prolonged computer work.