

EyetoEye

with Dr. Brett C. Collins



Computer Eyestrain Causes More Problems than You Think

There is no question that the computer has become the number one business and communication tool for many people. But this increase in staring at a digital screen for hours and hours has caused eyestrain for millions who don't even realize why their eyes are tired, red or irritated. Other symptoms could include a feeling of a foreign body in the eye and excessive watering as the eyes try to compensate for the lack of moisture. Computer eyestrain is actually the number one office-related health complaint.

Major Eye Complications of Computer Usage

- **Eyestrain** – From prolonged computer use due to overusing the focusing muscles.
- **Dry eyes** – Blinking is vital when working at a computer – it rewets your eyes to avoid dryness and irritation. When working at a computer people blink less frequently and many offices have dry environments that also reduce tearing.

Preventative Care

Computer users should have an eye exam before they start working on a computer and once a year thereafter, according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Optometrists can also administer a dry eye test to determine your quality, amount and distribution of tears. But for the majority of people who have been clueless that their eyestrain and overall eye fatigue and dryness was due to computer usage, here are some other tips to remedy the eyestrain and/or dry eyes.

Work Area Solutions

- Feet should be flat on the floor; the distance from your chair to the hollow of your knee should be 2"-4"; your wrist/hand should extend nearly straight from the elbow to the

home row of the keyboard.

- The preferred work surface height is about 26"; locate your monitor 16"-30" from your eyes; the top of the monitor should be 10 to 20 degrees below your eyes.
- Eliminate bright light sources from your peripheral vision; minimize glare on monitor, adjust its brightness so type is easily read.

Eyecare Solutions

Dry eyes: Excessive dry eye can damage tissue and possibly scar the cornea – impairing vision. Depending on the degree of dry eye, these remedies should be followed:

- Increase blinking to spread tears over the eyes.
- Prescription medications such as Restasis should be used for moderate dry eyes or especially for a condition known as chronic dry eye – a functional problem in the tear-producing glands of the eyes. Restasis is the only prescription eye drop that increases tear production and reduces eye inflammation.
- Insert small plugs in the corner of the eyes to slow drainage and loss of tears. These devices block the tear duct that carries tears away from the surface of the eye. This widely performed procedure is safe, quick, painless and totally reversible.
- Increase the level of humidity.

Red eyes: Although many people self-medicate to get the red out of their eyes, this will temporarily remove the red but can damage the eye over time and not alleviate the dryness. Your eye care professional can determine the best product for your specific need.

Unfortunately human eyes were made to work most efficiently at a distance, but in our technology age – focused on monitors and close work – it is extremely important to apply these tips to care for the only two eyes we have to live and work more comfortably.

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