

# Eye Health for the Workplace

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We know that some occupations require safety eyewear to protect eyes from injury and/or vision loss. But did you know the office environment can also cause eye and vision problems? Although not as sudden or devastating as an industrial accident, eye and vision problems can create discomfort, headaches, increased errors, and reduced productivity in the office.




People often have physical and visual symptoms resulting from an office work environment: eye irritation, squinting, visual discomfort, blurry vision, and difficulty focusing. These often get worse at the end of the day, leading to red or watery eyes, headaches, and eye strain. Together these symptoms may indicate computer-related eye problems, but someone can have them without working on a computer.

Problem	Solution
Due to ventilation systems, dry air, dust, or printer toner in the air, tears may not adequately coat and moisten the eye, leading to red, burning, or irritated eyes. When reading or using the computer, people tend to not blink as often—compounding the problem.	Blink more when reading or working at the computer. Your eye doctor can evaluate and treat dry eyes if it's a chronic problem.
Many offices have fluorescent lights directly overhead that may be too bright for comfort. The light may reflect off equipment into the eyes, interfering with vision. Windows may let in direct sunlight, causing workers to squint or have difficulty seeing.	If the lighting can't be reduced or controlled, a hat or visor may reduce some of the bright light. Even adjusting the angle of a computer monitor can help.
If a person's desk, chair, keyboard, and computer monitor aren't oriented properly, it can lead to rapid visual fatigue. Older computer monitors are more likely to have lower quality images, flickering, and bothersome reflections from the screen.	Place the screen 24 inches or more away from your face, and make sure it's directly in front of and slightly lower than your eyes.
It actually takes a small amount of effort to focus your eyes on paper or a computer screen, and over time this effort can become fatiguing. Some people have visual focusing and coordination problems that make reading or using a computer uncomfortable or cause headaches.	Take frequent breaks (20-20-20 rule: after 20 minutes of computer use, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds). You may also benefit from specific glasses prescribed for office work that help you focus at the correct distance.

If you experience symptoms such as red, irritated, burning eyes, headache, or visual fatigue while at work, make an appointment with your VSP Vision Care provider.

Describe what you are experiencing and he or she can recommend the most effective treatment options. These can include modifying your work area, using the proper prescription glasses, eye medications, or a program of therapeutic visual activities, referred to as vision therapy. One or all of these may be needed to keep your eyes and vision healthy and to keep you productive at work.

**For more on computer-related eye problems, visit:**

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