

# YOUR EYES AT WORK

There are consequences to staring at screens from morning until night. Dry, tired eyes are one. But high blood pressure and other vascular issues associated with a sedentary (read: sitting down) lifestyle also affect your eyesight in ways you may not be able to blink away.

**I**t's the end of a long day. You hit send on that last e-mail, look up, and the exit sign down the hall seems a little blurry. You blink a few times, and it comes back into focus, but your eyes just feel tired.

Eyestrain or eye fatigue isn't necessarily a dangerous condition, but it can be bothersome, even downright painful, especially when accompanied by dry, itchy eyes.

"In an office environment where you're staring at a computer screen, your blink rate goes down," says Dr. David Hardten, founding partner and attending surgeon at Minnesota Eye Consultants in Minneapolis. "Your eye doesn't get wetted properly, and that can cause eye fatigue and dryness and irritation symptoms; the eyes get red or burn or feel tired at the end of the day."

Other common eyestrain symptoms—especially among desk-sitters



Dr. David Whiting,  
Whiting Eye Clinic



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*"The same type of advice your primary care doctor would give [for] lowering blood pressure and blood sugar is important for the eye as well, because the eye is a highly vascular structure and potentially prone to the same types of things—blood clots, hemorrhages—as the brain and heart."*

—DR. DAVID WHITING, WHITING EYE CLINIC

**When you're 20**, eye strength is at its peak, so eye fatigue at work or anywhere isn't as much of an issue. **When you're 45 and older**, the strength isn't there. The eye strains to find close-up focal points. This can lead to headaches and muscle aches in the neck and shoulders.

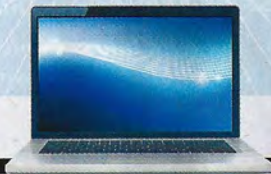
who spend the majority of the day looking at a computer screen—include temporary blurred vision when readjusting to distance, headaches, or even muscle aches due to straining your head and neck to better see the screen.

“The eye has to work to bring the focus point up close,” says Dr. David Whiting, owner of Whiting Eye Clinic. “When we're 20, we have so much strength in the muscles that it doesn't seem to be an issue, but at 45 and 55 it becomes much more difficult and the eye has to strain.”

If symptoms persist, it's a good idea to make an appointment with your eye doctor, as many issues related to eyestrain—including something called Computer Vision Syndrome—can be alleviated with the correct prescription or even over-the-counter treatments.

### Computer Vision Syndrome:

Headaches, blurred vision, dry eyes, and neck and shoulder pain caused by the high visual demands of frequent screen viewing, according to the American Optometric Association. Treatment includes positioning screens and workplace seating, lighting adjustments, and conscientious blinking.



Dr. David Hardten,  
Minnesota Eye  
Consultants

*“If you're wearing contact lenses, you certainly should have an annual eye checkup. You need to be following the care instructions from your eye doctor about your lens wear, making sure they're fitting properly, making sure you have a clean contact lens case, and properly following the directions for the solutions you're using.”*

—DR. DAVID HARDTEN, MINNESOTA EYE CONSULTANTS