

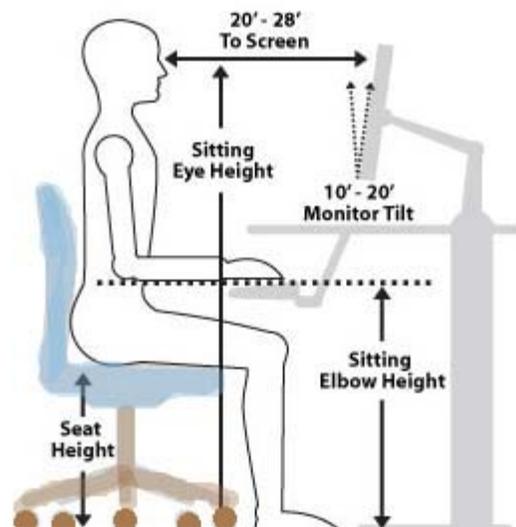


Computers and your vision

Like many Canadians, you probably spend hours in front of a computer every day. People young and old are prone to health complaints linked directly to computer use, such as eye strain, headaches, blurred vision, dry or irritated eyes, excessive blinking or squinting, neck or back aches, sensitivity to light and double vision. This group of problems is called Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS). As many as 70-75% of computer users suffer from CVS but most of these people are unaware that a large part of their discomfort can be fixed.

There are several steps you can take to avoid these problems (the same rules apply to playing video games):

- Don't sit too close to the screen. Many people find 50-60 cm (20-28 inches) most comfortable.
- The top of the terminal should be slightly below a horizontal eye level. This will help avoid troublesome eye and head movements.
- Tilt the top of the terminal away from you at a 10-20 degree angle.
- Place document holders close to your screen within the same viewing distance as the screen.
- Keep your keyboard and monitor in line.
- Keep your screen free of fingerprints and dust.
- Adjust your keyboard so it does not lie flat.



Adjust your chair properly:

- Your feet should be flat on the floor (or on a slightly angled foot rest) with your knees bent close to or greater than 90 degrees.
- Your neck and upper back should be straight and your lower back well supported (snug against the seat to fit your spinal contour).
- The distance from the front of your chair to the hollow of your knee should be 5-10 cm.
- Your wrist and hand should extend nearly straight from the elbow to the home row of the keyboard.

The lighting is important too:

- Room and screen brightness should be similar.
- The contrast between the characters on the screen and the screen background should be high.
- Lights and windows near/behind the monitor and shiny surfaces can cause reflections/glare. Closing blinds, moving your monitor, and angling the lights may help.

Develop good work habits:

- Take a break. You relax your eye muscles by looking far away such as out a window or down the hallway. 10 minutes every hour or 15 minutes every 2 hours is good.
- We tend to blink less when using a computer causing our eyes to become dry. Artificial tears (eyedrops) and paying attention to blinking can provide relief.

Your optometrist can help by:

- Correcting even small amounts of near- or far-sightedness or astigmatism.
- Checking your ability to focus your eyes on close work.
- Checking the health of internal structures of the eye.
- Checking medications that you are taking that may contribute to dry eyes such as anti-histamines.
- Prescribing computer glasses customized to your needs utilizing such things as anti-reflective coatings, tints or bi-focals/multi-focals.

Solving your problems may be as easy as rearranging your workspace, making simple adjustments to your work habits, or needing a pair of computer glasses. At your next visit, please be sure to tell us if you are a regular computer user!