

THE 20/20/20 RULE FOR EYESTRAIN

Many of us spend a lot of time in front of the computer each day—and it can really take a toll on your eyes. Eye strain is a common complaint in many workplaces—so it's important to know how to prevent it and to utilize the 20-20-20 Rule.

The 20-20-20 Rule encourages you to move your gaze away from the computer screen every 20 minutes, for a duration of at least 20 seconds, and you should be looking at an object that is at least 20 feet away.

Following this simple rule will help you relieve your eyes of strain or tiredness, and you can also make other small adjustments to help prevent eye strain. Try adjusting your computer screen's brightness and text size from time to time. An extremely bright screen will hurt your eyes and you could be squinting and straining to read if the text is too small or if the brightness setting is too dim.

Blink more often. Blinking is very important when working at a computer; blinking moistens your eyes to prevent dryness and irritation. When working at a computer, people blink less frequently — about one-third as often as they normally do — and many blinks performed during computer work are only partial lid closures, according to studies. Tears coating the eye evaporate more rapidly during long non-blinking phases and this can cause dry eyes. Also, the air in many office environments is dry, which can increase how quickly your tears evaporate, placing you at greater risk for dry eye problems.

Use proper lighting. Eye strain often is caused by excessively bright light either from outdoor sunlight coming in through a window or from harsh interior lighting. When you use a computer, your ambient lighting should be about half as bright as that typically found in most offices. Eliminate exterior light by closing drapes, shades or blinds. Reduce interior lighting by using fewer light bulbs or fluorescent tubes, or use lower intensity bulbs and tubes. If possible, position your computer monitor or screen so windows are to the side, instead of in front or behind it. Many computer users find their eyes feel better if they can avoid working under overhead fluorescent lights. If possible, turn off the overhead fluorescent lights in your office and use floor lamps that provide indirect incandescent or halogen lighting instead.

It's also key to stand up and move around every hour or so. That will help your eyes adjust to everything away from your computer screen. Staring for too long at your computer can also cause neck, back and shoulder pain—so it's important to take breaks and move when you can.

If you follow the 20-20-20 Rule, you'll alleviate stress and potential damage to your eyes. It's easy to get too adjusted to our work on the screen so always remember to take care of your eyes so eye strain does not take hold.

