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Computer Screens

Complaints of eye discomfort and fatigue are becoming more common as the use of computer screens increases. While it is true that computer screens can cause eyestrain, there is no convincing evidence that they can harm the eyes.

Some people fear that computer screens emit damaging ultraviolet (UV) light or radiation. The amount of UV light emitted by computer screens is a fraction of what is emitted from a fluorescent light. Radiation levels from computer screens are so low that a lifetime of exposure will not damage the eyes. After prolonged use of a computer screen, black and white objects may appear colored, but this is not a sign of eye damage.

Symptoms of eyestrain are eye irritation (red, watery, or dry eyes), eye fatigue (tired, aching heaviness of the eyelids or forehead), difficulty in focusing, and headaches. However, eyestrain does not result in permanent eye damage.

Eyestrain, backache, and muscle spasms may improve with proper arrangement of the computer screen and seating area. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides helpful suggestions on workstation arrangement.

It is important to wear appropriate eyeglasses adjusted for the distance between the eyes and the computer screen. Most computer users prefer to position the screen farther from where they normally read. Prescription eyeglasses should be adjusted accordingly.

Take periodic rest breaks. Using a computer requires unchanging body, head, and eye positions that can be fatiguing. Lubricate the eyes by blinking frequently or using artificial tears (lubricating eyedrops). Keep workstations clean to minimize eye irritation from dust.

Minimize light glare by adjusting office lights or using hoods or filters on the video screen. Standard office lighting is too bright for comfortable computer screen viewing.