Safety Brief Series

EYE STRAIN

Eye strain is an extremely common eye disorder. Each person has different symptoms when they experience eye strain but it can broadly be defined as anything that causes discomfort or pain to your eyes while viewing something. Eye strain is caused by your eye muscles becoming fatigued due to the overuse of your eye muscles during intense tasks such as working on the computer. While the effects of eye strain can often leave people feeling debilitated, preventing eye strain from occuring is extremely easy.

Symptoms of Eye Strain

The symptoms of eye strain will vary from person to person and in large part depends on the degree of strain and what has caused it (poor lighting, reflected glare, CRT montiors, etc.). Most of the symptoms will directly affect your eye, but if strain continues to worsen it can often spread to your neck or back and even result in headaches or migraines. The most common symptoms of eye strain are:

- General soreness in the eyes
- Dry eyes
- Itchy eyes
- Visibly red eyes
- Blurry vision (especially when trying to focus)
- Spasms or twitches around the eyes
- Watery eyes
- Burning eyes
- Double vision
- Head aches

Effective Methods of Preventing Eye Strain

- Your computer screen should be below your eye level at about 20 degrees.
- Ensure your work station doesn't face a window or bright light.
- Regularly clean your monitor of all dust.
- Take regular short breaks to rest your eyes and your body.
- Make sure you have a lamp that can be redirected so as not to produce any glare.

Action Item

Follow the 20/20/20 Rule: The 20/20/20 rule is a simple rule you can follow whenever you are working on a computer. Every twenty minutes focus on an item twenty feet away for twenty seconds. This lets your eyes refocus and allows your eye muscle to relax.

Reference VOSHA/OSHA Standards 29CFR1910 and 1926 for more information. Standards are available at http://www.osha.gov/laws-regs.html

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