# Give your eyes a break too.

A new term has arisen recently in the visual medical field, **Computer Vision Syndrome** (CVS). Many more people are spending both working and recreational time on their computers. In addition to the more obvious issues such as carpal tunnel syndrome and other neuro -muscular concerns related to the frequent use of computers at work, our eyes are showing signs of the impact on regular use while working in an office environment.
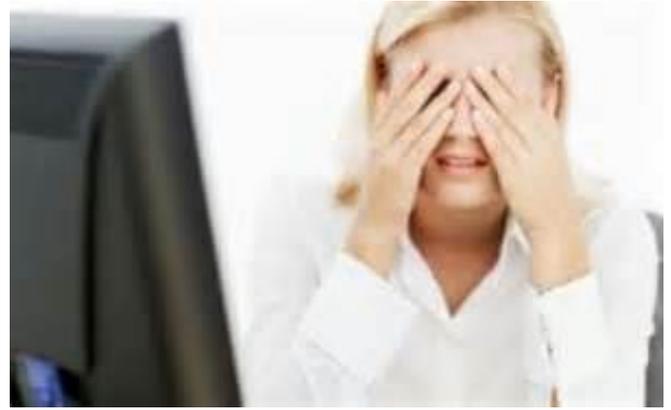
Covering your eyes and resting them for just a couple of minutes can reduce strain.

Issues that may have an impact on our vision include, distance from Video Display Terminal (vdt), overhead lighting, amount of time spent in front of the screen, brightness of the screen, reflections from outside light at a window. Let's address each of these concerns independently.

A. Distance from monitor or screen. Each of us has a wide variation in how well our eyes function. Some people have stigmatism, others nearly perfect vision, others need corrective lenses that are bifocal or trifocal to accommodate our own issues. In general the VDT should be 18-24"away from our eyes. The upper to middle portion of the screen should be at eye level.

B. Overhead lighting generally should not be too bright. Very often that is a function of the location where your office resides. If you do have some flexibility in controlling office lighting a medium range setting with a dimmer switch is best. Task lamps, for desktops are often a good substitute for overhead lights.

C. VDT screen brightness is easily regulated in most computers by going into control panel and lowering the brightness; less brightness on the screen not only reduces eyestrain, but also reduces the amount of energy used by the computer.

D. Reflections for outside lighting. This can be a big source of eyestrain. If your office has a large window to the side or directly behind where your VDT is located this can be a concern. A good way to test how much light is reflecting from outside would be to stand up and look at your screen from an angle at the corner of the screen, if you see a reflection of sunlight from outside your window in that reflection you may well be getting to much coming onto your VDT. Pulling shades or curtains even part way may reduce that amount of light.

Very often when we sit at our workstations for long periods of time we forget to blink. Dry eyes also can contribute to eyestrain.

Without a doubt the biggest issue is relaxation. When you work out lifting weights, running, walking for exercise you always give your body a chance to recover. Your eyes need that same consideration.

If you intend to be at your computer for an hour take 5 minutes and give your eyes a chance to recover. Close your eyes to rest them. Look away and focus on a distant object, this short respite will help to keep your eyes healthy.