

Eliminating Eyestrain

Eyestrain is the name given to a group of visual symptoms which includes sore eyes, red eyes, tired eyes, blurred vision and headaches. Also known as “asthenopia”, eyestrain usually occurs when the visual demands of a task or environment exceed the capabilities of an individual’s visual system. The physical sensation of eyestrain can be related to:

- Contraction of the muscles around the eye. This may be exacerbated by squinting the eyes to see.
- Dryness of the eye surface. When we concentrate, we tend not to blink as frequently, and this can contribute to decreased tear film stability (i.e. dryness).

Task and work environment

Factors which can increase the risk of eyestrain include:

- Small font size / small detail
- Poor contrast between text and background
- Hard to distinguish colours
- Short working distances
- Near tasks located above eye height
- Poor illumination
- Uneven illumination
- Glare
- Tasks which require high levels of concentration
- Insufficient rest breaks.



Individuals

Factors which can increase the risk of eyestrain include:

- Uncorrected refractive errors (e.g. the person requires an updated spectacle lens prescription)
- Binocular vision disorders (i.e. difficulties associated with how the eyes work together)
- Dry eyes.

Eliminating eyestrain in the workplace

Eyestrain can reduce productivity and efficiency and increase the likelihood of errors.

If someone experiences eyestrain then they should have an eye examination to determine if there is an ocular cause. However, it is also important to evaluate the task and work environment to ensure that it provides optimal visual comfort.

Eyestrain may be caused by a combination of task, environment and individual factors, e.g. a person has difficulty focusing on their computer display, but their discomfort is increased by working long hours while reading tiny size font. Therefore, adopting a holistic approach and considering all possible factors is often required to improve visual comfort in the workplace.



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