

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 2009

For Further Information, Contact:
Mallory Block, WOA Director of Communications
Office: 608.824.2200
Cell: 770.380.5126
mallorywoaoffice@tds.net

NINE TO FIVERS RISK COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME

Wisconsin Optometric Association offers advice to computer users in honor of Computer Learning Month

Computers are a fixture of everyday life. But with hours logged behind the screen, vision and eye health are at risk for problems. To honor October as Computer Learning Month, the [Wisconsin Optometric Association \(WOA\)](#) reminds all citizens to take care of their vision and health when working on computers.

According to a survey by the [Journal of the American Optometric Association](#), eye and vision problems are the most frequently reported health-related problems among computer workers. Experts use the term [Computer Vision Syndrome \(CVS\)](#) to describe the complex eye and vision problems related to or experienced during computer use. Many of the symptoms of CVS can be broadly classified as *asthenopia* or eye strain. Other symptoms, classified as musculoskeletal, include neck and back pain, as improper computer screen positioning can lead to awkward body posture. Other symptoms include fatigue, headache, dry eye and double vision.

CVS can result from poorly designed work stations or wearing glasses not properly designed for specific tasks. According to the [American Optometric Association \(AOA\)](#) 2007 American Eye-Q™ survey, 82 percent of Americans frequently work with a computer or similar handheld device, yet 78 percent of Americans do not have their computer monitor positioned at the recommended height.

“The key is adjusting certain environmental factors in order to make tasks less visually demanding,” Wisconsin Optometric Association President Dr. Brad Jorgensen explains.

Dr. Jorgensen recommends the following tips for healthy computer use:

- **Limit the amount of time you continuously use the computer.** Practice the 20/20 rule (look away from the computer every 20 minutes for 20 seconds) to minimize the development of eye-focusing problems and irritation.
- **Check the height and arrangement of your computer.** Optometrists suggest the eyes look downward. Optimally, the computer screen should be 15 to 20 degrees below eye level (about 4 or 5 inches) as measured from the center of the screen and 20 to 28 inches from the eyes.
- **Check for glare on the computer screen.** Windows or other light sources should not be directly visible when sitting in front of the monitor. When this occurs, turn the desk or computer to prevent glare on the screen.
- **Reduce the amount of lighting in the room to match the computer screen.** A smaller light can be substituted for a bright overhead light or a dimmer switch can be installed to give flexible control of room lighting.
- **Keep Blinking.** To minimize the chances of developing [dry eye](#) when using a computer, make an effort to blink frequently. Blinking keeps the front surface of the eye moist.
- **Have your vision checked regularly.** Vision and eye health can change rapidly and frequently, particularly as one ages. Having one's vision examined on a regular, timely basis is important to maintaining overall eye health.

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 650 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's Web site at www.woa-eyes.org.