

# Jeni's Health & Fitness Tips

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Hi Everyone!

Do you spend more than two hours a day sitting in front of a computer? This could result in two problems; lack of mobility leading to reduced fitness, and a vision problem known as Computer Vision Syndrome. My Chiropractor, Dr. Sascha Samerski, alerted me to the vision problem. Believe it or not, there really is a condition known as Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS). Surprised? Well you shouldn't be given the fact that it is likely to affect those who spend more than two hours a day in front of a computer screen. We all know at least a few people who fit into that category!

## ***The symptoms of CVS include:***

- Blurred or double vision
- Headaches
- Dry eyes
- Neck and/or shoulder pain
- Difficulty focusing
- Sharp or dull pain
- Light sensitivity

Why does CVS occur? It seems that your eyes react much differently to computer-generated images than they do to images in printed materials. Computer-generated images are made up of small dots called pixels, and your eyes find it difficult to adjust to focusing on them.

Computer users who wear bifocals have a particularly difficult time. Bifocals force the wearer to tilt their head backward so they can view the computer monitor through the lower portion of the lens. Prolonged head tilt can lead to neck, shoulder pain and back pain and headaches.

Most eyeglasses and contacts are designed for print reading and not for computer work. However, many optometrists are beginning to recommend eyeglasses and contacts that are specifically designed for reading at computer monitor distance. They may very well be worth the investment, especially if they reduce the impact of CVS-related eye problems.

There are some options available to relieve accumulated eye strain. You can try to focus on an object in the distance about every 15 minutes when working on a computer. Your monitor should be at the correct height and distance at your desk and you can adjust the monitor's contrast and room lighting to suit your needs. However, having your computer workstation configured correctly can only minimise the symptoms, ergonomics cannot correct a visual problem.

The other problem with constant sitting is that our bodies were not designed to sit still but to be constantly on the move. So if you are forced to sit for long periods at a computer, try and organise short breaks every hour. You can use these breaks for some physical activity. Stretch, walk, turn your head from side to side, go get a drink, do some shoulder rolls and move your arms and legs. You can do a few push ups leaning on the desk or a few tricep dips on your chair (of course make sure it is secured first!).

Don't worry what your work colleagues think of all this. If they prefer to laugh rather than join you, it will be to their detriment. You will be laughing all the way to better health.

Yours in health,

*Jeni*