



## News Release, For Immediate Distribution

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## Vision Discomfort Associated with Computer Vision Syndrome

*Improper arrangement of computers and prolonged use may strain eyesight*

**PORTLAND, OR, March 13, 2008** – People who use computers daily at work or at home could suffer from computer vision syndrome, which leaves them vulnerable to problems like dry eye, eyestrain, neck and/or backache, light sensitivity and fatigue. The Oregon Optometric Association (OOPA), in conjunction with the American Optometric Association (AOA), warns these symptoms can result from individual visual problems, poor work station configuration and improper work habits.

Eighty-two percent of American adults frequently work with a computer or a handheld device, such as a PDA, according to results released by AOA from its American Eye-Q™ survey. This information is supported by results from the AOA's Omnibus survey which showed that 42 percent of respondents spend three or more hours a day in front of a computer or handheld device. Additionally, 78 percent of Americans do not have their computer monitor positioned at the correct height – below eye level.

Pre-existing, uncorrected vision problems like farsightedness and astigmatism, inadequate eye focusing or eye coordination abilities, and age-related eye issues also contribute to computer vision syndrome.

“Working at a computer requires a great deal of eye movement and eye focusing,” said Dr. Doug Smith, Medford-area optometric physician. “The constant re-focusing effort stresses the eye muscles, leading to computer-related vision problems. It can have a great impact on individuals’ comfort and productivity, whether they are at work, school or home.”

According to the survey, Americans are feeling the pain of computer vision syndrome. Forty-one percent said they have experienced eye strain, and 45 percent cited neck or back pain after prolonged computer or handheld device use. Many of these symptoms are temporary and will improve after ceasing computer work. However, some individuals may continue to experience visual problems, such as blurred distant vision, even after computer work has stopped. If the causes of the problem are not addressed, the symptoms will recur and perhaps worsen with future computer use.

Special computer glasses and computer screen filters are available to help reduce glare and discomfort, but only 11 percent of Americans currently use these devices.

The OOPA and AOA recommend people follow these guidelines to prevent or reduce eye and vision problems associated with computer vision syndrome:

- **Have your vision checked regularly.** Prior to age 61, adults should have a comprehensive eye exam every two years, or as recommended by an eye doctor, and annually after that age. Before you go for your eye examination, have a co-worker measure the distance from your eye to the computer in inches. If you work from papers on your desk, measure that distance as well. Bring the measurements to your eye examination. This will help your doctor ensure that your glasses will be correct for your computer usage.
- **Limit the amount of time you continuously use the computer.** Practice the 20/20 rule by looking away from the computer every 20 minutes for 20 seconds to minimize the development of eye-focusing problems and eye irritation caused by infrequent blinking.



- **Check the height and arrangement of the computer.** Optometric physicians suggest more comfortable computer viewing can be achieved when the eyes are looking 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 or reflections 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. Turn three-way bulbs to the lowest setting.
- **Keep Blinking.** To minimize the chances of developing dry eye when using a computer, make an effort to blink frequently (the norm is every five seconds). Blinking keeps the front surface of the eye moist. You may experience eye dryness if you are exposed to direct currents of air from heating or cooling systems. If this occurs, try to find workarounds such as repositioning your desk, deflecting the air draft, or adding a humidifier to your desk. If you wear contact lenses, you may need to increase the use of contact lens lubricants or even switch back to glasses for prolonged computer use.

### **Survey Information**

The second American Eye-Q™ survey was commissioned by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC). Using a random digit dialing methodology, ORC conducted interviews with 1,005 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. The margin of error is  $\pm 3.1$  percent for the general population. All data is weighted to represent the U.S. general populations with respect to gender, geographic region, and age group.

The AOA Omnibus survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) CARAVAN Services from January 31 – February 1, 2008. Using a random digit dialing methodology, ORC conducted interviews with 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults. The margin of error is 3 percentage points for the general population. All data is weighted to represent the U.S. general population with respect to gender, geographic region, race and age group.

### **About the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association**

The Oregon Optometric Physicians Association is a statewide organization comprised of Doctors of Optometry, college of optometry faculty, optometric students and industry-related associates. It advocates advancing the quality, availability and accessibility of eye, vision and related health care. It also works to represent the profession of optometry, to enhance and promote the independent and ethical decision making of its members, and to assist optometric physicians in practicing the highest standards of patient care. Based in Milwaukie, Oregon, the OOPA has nearly 400 members. For more information, visit [www.oregonoptometry.org](http://www.oregonoptometry.org).

### **About the American Optometric Association (AOA)**

The American Optometric Association represents more than 34,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students and paraoptometric assistants and technicians. AOA doctors of optometry are highly qualified, trained doctors on the frontline of eye and vision care who examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. In addition to providing eye and vision care, optometrists play a major role in a patient's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Doctors of optometry have the skills and training to provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States. For more information, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).

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