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What is computer vision syndrome?

It is, according to the

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American Optometric Association, “the complex of eye and vision problems

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related to near work which are experienced during or related to computer use.” The AOA developed this diagnosis after seeing an

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increase in the number of patients requiring eye exams due to symptoms they experienced at the computer. The visual stress of working at computers can bring on nearsightedness (myopia) or make it worse, and can also worsen middle-aged farsightedness (presbyopia).

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CVS is a repetitive strain injury. One muscle that is strained is the ciliary muscle, a muscle within the eye which changes the shape of the lens to determine the focus. Pixels, which make up the images we see on the computer screen, are bright in the middle and blurry on the edges;

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the brain is unable to determine a focal length for pixels, and endlessly attempts to do so, The iris, a muscle within the eye which regulates the amount of light that enters the eye, is strained by inappropriate lighting and glare, which are often a problem with computer work, and the result is light sensitivity (intolerance of strong light).

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (14)

I am happy that people are beginning to wake up to this notion, and that a preventive, protective attitude has already begun working its way into the human psyche. Everyday, more people pay closer attention to the food and beverages they consume, to the environment in which they live, and to establishing general healthy habits like physical exercise. But we still do not spend enough time addressing the health and well-being of our eyes.

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (12)

That is the purpose of See Well Throughout Your Life: to help people maintain and repair their vision as a way to increase the length and quality of their lives. It seems ironic to me that the scientific establishment might be to blame for the sorry condition in which we are finding ourselves. The success that optometry and ophthalmology professions have had in recent decades is largely to blame for our culture's laissez faire attitude toward the health of our eyes. This has happened by correcting vision problems through prescriptive lenses and surgical technology without offering any alternative.

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (10)

People often take it for granted that if something goes wrong with their vision, medical science will come to their rescue. And while this may be true in many cases, I am a firm believer that it is always better to prevent a disease in the first place rather than to simply wait for the system to break down in hopes that science will offer a solution. First of all, preventative medicine is cheaper! Compare 20 minutes a day of aerobic exercise, such as running along the beach or bicycling through the park, to the extreme cost of a surgical procedure to correct clogged arteries. Even factoring in the price of an expensive, luxury gym membership and regular massages, the preventative approach is still far less expensive.

6

LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (4)

It is a way to reconnect with your neighborhood, to break out of your routine, and to expand your psychological comfort zone. And the same can be said of learning how to blink correctly, practicing the scrutiny of details, looking far into the distance, and nighttime walking.

Computers have certainly done much to advance the quality of life in our culture. Yet, every year, as hundreds of millions more people worldwide incorporate computers into their routines, they expose their precious eyes to constant, unnatural strain and poor lighting.

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (3)

By attaining their central vision to stare blurry-eyed at the screen, people forget to utilize their peripheral vision. They forget to blink. They forget to breathe correctly. They scrunch their shoulders and tense their necks. They squint, trying to analyze digital data. And, instead of using the natural human ability to scan for images, they simply sit and wait passively for the flood of constantly changing images to come to them. We must be proactive in taking care of our eyes in front of the computer in order to prevent vision problems and keep our eyes refreshed on a regular basis.

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (2)

It is our job and responsibility to proactively work the effort to connect with nature and with our own human senses. We must be proactive in taking care of our eyes in front of the computer in order to prevent vision problems and keep our eyes refreshed on a regular basis. By attaining their central vision to stare blurry-eyed at the screen, people forget to utilize their peripheral vision. They forget to blink. They forget to breathe correctly. They scrunch their shoulders and tense their necks. They squint, trying to analyze digital data. And, instead of using the natural human ability to scan for images, they simply sit and wait passively for the flood of constantly changing images to come to them. We must be proactive in taking care of our eyes in front of the computer in order to prevent vision problems and keep our eyes refreshed on a regular basis.

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (8)

We must commit right now to creating a health regimen for our eyes, because the whole body is affected by eyestrain. The human eye was made to hunt, to scan the horizon, to look at birds, to look into the distance. It was designed to be engaged in a variety of circumstances, looking at different things at different distances and in different light. If we stare only at a computer screen all day under the same lighting, we lose the variation as well as the acuity. We lose the passion for looking and seeing the diversity of life around us. What then does this do to our bodies and to our energy levels?

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LARGE AND SMALL PRINT (6)

So many people report that they feel exhausted in the middle of the day, that they need stimulants to revive them. We must remember that whatever we do with the eyes affects the whole body.

The habits that you will develop if you follow the exercises in See Well Throughout Your Life can be the lifeline you need. You will reinvent your passion for life, while protecting the vision you have and correcting the degenerative condition from which you suffer. Best of all, as with any kind of personal exercise regimen, these habits will impact your life in ways that transcend the utilitarian benefits of disease prevention.

Like the poet said, "The eyes are the windows to the soul." By connecting with our vision, we connect with light and darkness, with nature, with our physical environment, and with each other in fundamental, simple, and beautiful ways. . . . Going for a jog doesn't have to be just good physical exercise, it can also be a welcome relief for the mind.