



Video Display Terminals

Complaints of eye discomfort and fatigue are becoming more common as use of video display terminals (VDTs) increases. While it is true that VDTs can cause eyestrain, there is no convincing evidence that VDTs can harm the eyes.

Some people fear VDTs emit damaging ultraviolet light or radiation. The amount of ultraviolet light emitted by VDTs is a fraction of what is emitted from a fluorescent light. Radiation levels from VDTs are so low a lifetime of exposure will not damage the eyes. After prolonged use of a VDT, black and white objects may appear colored, but this is not a sign of eye damage.

Symptoms of eyestrain are eye irritation (red, watery or dry eyes), eye fatigue (tired, aching heaviness of the eyelids or forehead), difficulty in focusing, and headaches. However, eyestrain does not result in permanent eye damage.

Eyestrain, backache and muscle spasms may improve with proper arrangement of the VDT and seating area. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides helpful suggestions on workstation arrangement.

It is important to wear appropriate glasses adjusted for the distance from the VDT. Most VDT users prefer to position the screen farther from where they normally read. Prescription glasses should be adjusted accordingly.

Take periodic rest breaks. Using a VDT requires an unchanging body, head, and eye position that can be fatiguing. Lubricate the eyes by blinking frequently or using artificial tears (lubricating eye drops.) Keep workstation clean to minimize eye irritation from dust.

Minimize light glare by adjusting office lights or using hoods or filters on the video screen. Standard office lighting is too bright for comfortable VDT use.