Eye strain and office ergonomics safety moment

29 CFR 1904.5, 1904.35, 1903.1, 1910.22

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

At the end of a long day at the screen, do your eyes feel tired or dry, or do your neck, shoulders or wrists ache?

Why it matters

Desk work looks easy, but hours in one position add up. Tired or dry eyes, blurry vision, headaches and a sore neck, back or wrists often come from how the screen, chair and keyboard are set up, and from sitting too long without a break. Small aches that get ignored can turn into problems that are harder to fix. A few changes to your setup and habits help, at the office and at home.

Key points

1. **Give your eyes a break**
   When we stare at a screen, we tend to blink less, which can leave eyes dry and tired. Every so often, look away at something far off, like the other side of the room or out a window, and blink a few times. Stand up and move between tasks. If eye strain or headaches keep coming back, get your eyes checked and tell the eye doctor how much screen work you do.

2. **Set up your screen**
   Put the screen straight in front of you, about an arm's length away, with the top at or a little below eye level. If you wear bifocals or progressive lenses, a slightly lower screen can keep you from tipping your head back. Match the screen brightness to the room, make the text big enough to read without leaning in, and keep the screen clean.

3. **Cut the glare**
   Glare from windows and overhead lights makes your eyes work harder. Turn the screen so windows are off to the side instead of in front of you or behind you, and close the blinds when the sun is bright. Use a desk lamp aimed at your papers, not at the screen.

4. **Sit and type in a relaxed position**
   Adjust your chair so your feet rest flat on the floor or a footrest and your lower back is supported. Keep your shoulders relaxed, your elbows close to your sides and your wrists straight while you type. Keep the keyboard and mouse close together at the same height, and change positions often, because no single posture is good for hours.

ToolboxKits by ALC Media LLC. Not affiliated with OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Not legal advice.

5 Working from home counts too

Laptops on couches, beds and kitchen counters can lead to hunched backs and bent necks. Use a separate keyboard and mouse and raise the laptop, or plug in a monitor, and keep cords out of walkways. Under OSHA's recordkeeping rule, an injury or illness while working at home is considered work-related if it happens while you are doing work for pay and is directly related to the work, not to the general home setting.

29 CFR 1904.5(b)(7)

6 Report aches early

Tingling, numbness or pain in your hands, wrists, neck or back that keeps coming back is an early warning. Report it while the fix may still be simple, like a new chair setting or a different mouse. OSHA's recordkeeping rule requires employers to have a reasonable procedure for reporting work-related injuries and illnesses, and employers may not fire or discriminate against you for reporting (29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)(iv)).

29 CFR 1904.35(b)(1)

Scenario

Picture this: an office coordinator has been working from home for a few months. She works on a laptop at the kitchen counter, sits on a bar stool, and often skips lunch to answer email. Lately her neck aches by mid-afternoon, her eyes burn, and two fingers tingle at night. She figures it is just part of the job. What could she change at home, and what should she do about the tingling?

Crew discussion

1. What is one thing about your screen, chair or lighting you could adjust today?
2. How often do you get up from your desk, and what reminds you to?
3. If you work from home, what does your setup look like, and what would make it better?
4. Who do you tell about aches, numbness or eye strain, and how do you report it here?

Bottom line **Set up your screen and chair to fit you, rest your eyes and move often, and report aches early.**

Free to share and adapt for non-commercial use under the CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0). Credit: ToolboxKits, toolboxkits.com/topics/office-ergonomics/

Sign-in sheet / Hoja de asistencia

Topic / Tema Office ergonomics / Ergonomía en la oficina

Date / Fecha _____

Trainer / Instructor _____ Location / Lugar _____ Company / Empresa _____

#	Name Nombre	Signature Firma	Company Empresa	Date Fecha
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Trainer signature / Firma del instructor _____ Time / Hora _____

ToolboxKits by ALC Media LLC. Not affiliated with OSHA or the U.S. Department of Labor. Not legal advice.