

Screen addicts are asked to look away now!

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Goggle-eyed office workers are being encouraged to take a break during National Eye Health Week (13 – 19 June 2011) after a poll¹ – commissioned by the Eyecare Trust and Simplyhealth – reveals just one in five employees takes regular breaks from their computer¹, as recommended by eye health professionals and the Health and Safety Executive².

That's despite a staggering 90 per cent of us admitting to suffering symptoms of screen fatigue – headaches, eyestrain and problems with close and long distance vision.

Prolonged screen use can put enormous strain on our eyes and trigger episodes of visual stress yet a quarter (27%) of those polled said they only look up to grab some lunch or head off to important meetings, whilst one in ten workaholics sit in front of their screen all day without a break!

To help computer users avoid eye health problems associated with intensive screen use the Trust and Simplyhealth have launched a website www.screensmart.co.uk offering advice on how to beat symptoms of screen fatigue and information on employee rights when using a computer or any visual display unit during the course of their work.

Many employees (40%) are unaware they can claim a free sight test (and a contribution towards the cost of any eyewear required for VDU work) from their employer if they regularly use a computer monitor at work³.

Tips for beating screen fatigue include....

Take frequent breaks – give your eyes a rest every 20 minutes or so.

Create an eye-friendly environment – position copy documents at roughly the same distance from the screen to avoid having to re-focus, dim the lights (the ration of ambient light to monitor light should be three to one) and minimise any glare or reflections.

Customise you screen settings – position your monitor an arm's length away, keep your eyes level with the top of the screen, select a font size of 12pts or above and make sure you have a clean screen.

And, keep blinking – when you concentrate on the screen for long periods your blink rate can slow by as much as 400%!

Commenting on the importance of safeguarding your sight when working at a computer screen Dharmesh Patel, Chariman of the Eyecare Trust said: "Making a few simple adjustments to your seat, screen settings or posture could be all that's needed to save your eyes from feeling tired and irritated after a long day at work. Staring at a screen can also highlight existing vision problems that you may have so it's vital that computer users visit their optometrist for regular eye examinations⁴ and follow a healthy eyecare regime."

James Glover from Simplyhealth says: "At Simplyhealth, we've been helping people look after their eye health for many years, so we're keen to support the week and help many more. Employers have a legal obligation to protect the eyesight of employees that regularly use a visual display unit (VDU) and even machinery in the workplace for an hour, or sometimes less, each day. From next year, under EU legislation, this obligation extends to employees who drive while on company business. One possible solution for employers looking to meet its duty of care responsibilities is to offer employees a cash plan, such as those from Simplyhealth, as these affordable plans provide cover for sight tests and prescription glasses."

For more advice on how to be ScreenSmart and affordable eyecare solutions log on to www.screensmart.co.uk

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For further press information please contact: Rachel Robson, Eyecare Trust Press Office, 01225 423394, pr@eyecaretrust.org.uk

1 Research study conducted by Opinion Matters between 8 – 12 February 2010. Sample: Total of 1,091 office workers.

2 Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations. Full regulations detailed in the Health and Safety Executive's guidance booklet L26.

3. State of the Nations Eyes survey 05 conducted by One Poll on behalf of the Eyecare Trust.

4. The Eyecare Trust recommends everyone has their eyes examined once every two years (unless advised otherwise by your optometrist or you experience visual difficulties in-between times).

Notes to Editors:

About Eyecare Trust

The Eyecare Trust is a registered charity that exists to promote awareness of ocular health and the importance of good eye care. www.eyecaretrust.org.uk

About Simplyhealth

- Previously known as HSA, BCWA, LHF, HealthSure and Totally Active, our family of health companies have joined together over the last 8 years to form Simplyhealth
- At Simplyhealth, we have been providing healthcare solutions for nearly 140 years, dedicated to serving our customers through a variety of cash plans, dental plans, private medical insurance, healthcare trusts and mobility and living aids
- Simplyhealth is a trading name of Simplyhealth Access, which is authorised and regulated by the

Financial Services Authority

- As of December 2009, Simplyhealth had 1.3 million customers providing cover for some 2.3 million people
- Simplyhealth is committed to making a positive impact on its communities. Each year, we help health related charities and causes to the tune of at least £1million

About National Eye Health Week

National Eye Health Week runs 13 – 19 June. A nationwide campaign, it aims to raise awareness of the importance of eye health and the need for regular sight tests. The organisers are encouraging everyone to think about why vision matters to them, and say 'I care about eye care'. www.visionmatters.org.uk

