

POEL9A Eye care



Long spells working in front of a screen can lead to tired eyes and discomfort.

Extensive research has found no evidence that display screen equipment (DSEs) can cause disease or *permanent* damage to the eyes or eyesight. Nonetheless, long spells working in front of a screen can lead to tired eyes and discomfort, and other symptoms of visual fatigue. Users with pre-existing vision defects may become more aware of these symptoms when using DSEs.

Symptoms of visual fatigue

- red eyes
- sore eyes
- gritty eyes
- difficulty focusing
- headaches

Causes of visual fatigue

However, two of the most common causes of visual fatigue are a) uncorrected vision and b) wearing bi-focals or varifocals, though if you have any doubts then do consult an optician or your GP.

a) Uncorrected vision

Regular eye tests are important to identify any problems with your vision. LCC policy is to pay for the cost of eye and eyesight tests for employees who regularly use DSEs, and to also cover the cost of entry-level spectacles, or contribute towards the cost of higher-specification glasses, if they are to be used solely for DSE work.

b) Wearing bifocals or vari-focals

A person wearing bifocals may find them most suitable for viewing work on a surface, e.g. a counter or a desk. However, when they need to look up, e.g. to focus on a screen, they look straight ahead through what would be the boundary between the different lenses that make up their glasses. This means that their vision is

obscured, so in order to overcome this, the user may adopt an unnatural / awkward posture with their head tilted back so they can view the screen through the lower lens. This can lead to postural fatigue and discomfort in the neck and shoulder region and can be further exacerbated by:

- poor screen distance
- glare/reflections
- lack of eye breaks
- contact lenses further drying out the surface of the eye.

How to reduce the risks of visual fatigue

- Plan your work day to include different tasks so you can take regular breaks to reduce screen time.
- Frequent short breaks from the screen are better than infrequent longer breaks – e.g. 5-10 minutes per hour. You don't even need to leave your desk to give your eyes a break from the screen - just look away from the screen at regular intervals, e.g. out of the window or into the distance.
- Ensure that your screen is well-positioned and properly-adjusted.
- Ensure that lighting conditions are suitable to reduce glare and reflection.
- If you wear bifocals, you may need to switch to a specific type of glasses for DSE work only. If in doubt, consult your optician or GP.
- Contact lens wearers may find the drier air produced by computers and other equipment is uncomfortable on their eyes. Try blinking more frequently, or using tear substitute drops to increase moisture to the eye. Where the air is particularly dry, employers can help by taking steps to increase humidity.

Additional resources

[G13 - DSE Policy](#)

[HSE advice/FAQs](#)

[HSE advice on working with VDUs/DSEs](#)