Healing
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Computer Stress Syndrome

Doctor Tandavan

The computer is perhaps one of the greatest communicative tools available to us in this century. However, it does produce physical stress to its users. The strain experienced is in direct ratio to the amount of time that one uses the computer and also to other factors that we will discuss-such as the placement of the computer, the lighting of the room in which the computer is used, one's posture while using the computer, visual factors including glare, inherent eyestrain, whether or not glasses are used and reflective glare. There are many other factors related to work habits that may lead to the computer stress syndrome.

The symptoms of this malady are headaches, eyeaches, burning of the eyes, excessive tearing and blinking, stiff neck, aching of the neck and back, tingling of the hands and fingers as well as feet. Sever migraine-type headaches are fairly common. Loss of appetite, indigestion, changes in mood and many other complaints can be traced to the above symptoms.

There may be limitations as to what one can do about the placement of the computer, depending on the room it is in, however, the following are some guidelines to use in choosing a work place for computer use. The computer should never face a wall or window, nor should a window be to the side of the operator because of the strain to the eyes. The computer is ideally placed in front of a doorway so that the operator may look through the door and into the corridor or next room. The operator should be able to see an area of the room around the monitor screen so that he will have a fixation to reality and his location. One should not be within 4-5 feet of the back or sides of another computer as the emissions from these surfaces (of the monitor and computer itself) may be hazardous. If the

computer is backed up to a wall or in a corner, the emissions may be reflected back upon the operator. If a window is present, ideally, shades should be installed so that the volume of light can be reduced and the glare on the screen eliminated. The monitor should be at eye level or slightly below it. It should not be in such a position that the eyes must look up to see it, for this may induce an altered state of awareness. If one wears bi- or tri-focals, the monitor must be in such a place that the head does not need to be elevated in order to use the near vision. If not, there is bound to be strain on the neck as well as the eyes. Also, there should be no source of light within the field of view of the operator while looking at the screen. This produces a tremendous strain on the eyes.

The lighting of the room is very important. There must be no glare upon the screen of the monitor. Preferably, lighting should be indirect-that is, bounced back from the ceiling. If flourescent lights are used, there ought to be an "egg-crate" diffusion screen in front of them and preferably the florescent tubes should be of the full spectrum or "VitaLight" type. The room must have a reduced level of light but not darkened, for that would again strain the eyes when looking at the monitor. Sometimes a tilt-type mounting for the monitor may be helpful in reducing glare on the screen. These guidelines will help you to position the computer within the room and also help achieve proper lighting. Part II will explain the proper posture to keep while working and its importance.

Dr. Devananda Tandavan, MD, is a member of the American Medical Association, the International College of Surgeons, the Society of Nuclear Medicine, the American Federation of Astrologers, the International Reiki Association, the International Center of Homeopathy- and more. Send your questions to Hinduism Today, 107 Kaholalele Road, Kapaa, Hawaii 96746 USA.