COMPUTER MOUSE

Most of us don't really care for mice. Cats hate them! We certainly don't accept them running around in our homes! Despite this lack of compassion, we have grown very dependent upon mice with respect to interacting with our computers. Little did we know that these pesky little rodents could cause more havoc in our offices than in our homes. Here are some tips to minimize the risks:

Whenever possible, place the mouse at the side of the keyboard and at the same level as the keys.

When using the mouse, rest your arm on the desk (or some other support such as armrests) to support the weight of the arm.

Position the mouse so that the wrist is straight - neither bent backward or to the side.

Rest the index finger lightly on the mouse button (don't hold it off the button) and do not grip the mouse too tightly.

Do not use the mouse as a guide when scrolling through text.

Finally try using your mouse in your non-dominant hand. Switching every so often gives the structures in your dominant hand a break. Be sure to switch the buttons on your computer settings so you can still use the main one with your index finger.

COMPUTER SCREEN

VDT's, as these screens are often called, can take a toll on our eyes. We have all felt bleary-eyed at the end of a day of intensive computer work. Uninterrupted use of VDT's increases the chance of eye fatigue and soreness, headaches and migraines.

However, there are ways to work on a computer work and lessen the risk of eyestrain. Here are just a few of the tips that may help.

- *Stop and look - elsewhere*
  Every 10 minutes, look at a distant object out the window or across the room for 10 seconds. This will allow your eye muscles to relax. Take a 3 - 5 minute break from looking at the screen every hour. Use this time to return a phone call or change your sitting position. Playing Solitaire obviously doesn't qualify!

- *Blink*
  When we look at bright VDT's - we are like animals caught in headlights - we get mesmerized and we stopping blinking. A blink is an eye massage. Consciously blink when you are working. Taking the short breaks discussed above will also help.

- *Minimize glare*
  Glare from lights makes it hard to see your VDT. Put your screen at right angles to bright lights. When you spend several hours on the computer, reduce the light; close the blinds, turn-off lights, etc.

- *Move back*
  If you are a parent or had a mother, you have probably used/heard, "Don't sit so close to the TV, you'll ruin your eyes!". We can also sit too close to our VDT's. Your color monitor, unless you have special visual needs, such as bifocals, should be 24 inches or more from your eyes. Sit back and see how far away you can comfortably view your VDT - move it back an inch or two each day until you reach this distance.
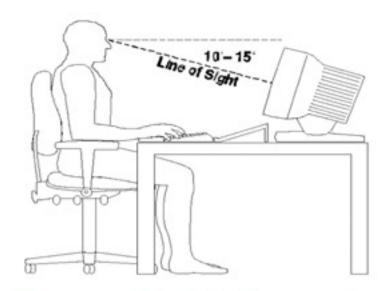
- *Look down*

  When we read we look down. The top of your VDT should be below the level of your eyes. The farther your screen is from your eyes, the lower it should be. However, we are all limited by the height of our desk and size our monitor. Do your best to look down on your VDT - after all it is inferior to you!

- *Exercises*

  Yes, your eyes have muscles and they have to be stretched. Try this mini-exercise. First - move your eyes up and down, side to side, and diagonally. Second - move your eyes in a clockwise then a counterclockwise direction. (Caution - Don't do this exercise while your supervisor is expressing an opinion).

Suggested height for monitor