

Strategies for Healthy Screen Habits

Since the onset of COVID-19, many of our work practices such as meetings, collaborations, teaching and document review are now conducted virtually. The strategies outlined below will help to promote healthy screen habits in this new world of virtual work.

Meetings back to back? – consider changing the way that you participate in meetings. For some meetings, consider turning your camera off and face away from the computer. You can listen and actively participate in meeting discussions without looking directly at your computer monitor. You may wish to indicate to the group that you are taking a screen break to ensure there are no perceptions of disengagement from the group.

Booking meetings – consider booking meetings that allow time for people to stretch or have some transition time between meetings. Determine if a meeting is required or are there other ways of sharing information or getting input. Only invite those required to attend.

Discussions with colleagues or students – are you meeting regularly with colleagues or students through platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams? Consider the above strategy highlighted for meetings or as an alternative, arrange some of your discussions over the phone. Be sure to utilize speaker phone or a headset in order to prevent strain in the neck.

Documents & emails – does a lot of your work involve document review, reading emails or online research? Consider printing documents and reading them on paper rather than reading on the screen. Be sure to be considerate about printing in order to limit the environmental impact.

You can also dictate your documents in Word. 'How to' information for document dictation can be found [here](#). Read aloud options are also available for PDF and Microsoft documents. Click [here](#) to learn more.

Taking breaks – your eyes and mind need a chance to rest. If most of your work requires active screen time, take a break every half hour for just a few minutes. Schedule your breaks by setting a timer to remind you to rest. This will also give your body a chance to rest and help to prevent ergonomic injuries.

Stay hydrated – drink water throughout the day and remember to blink regularly to keep your eyes from feeling dry and tired.

Tools & products – some tools and products such as screen filters and blue light glasses may be helpful in reducing fatigue from screen time. Individuals may also need to consider a larger computer monitor if working from a laptop or smaller screen. Speak to your supervisor about options for purchasing additional products. McMaster Purchasing information can be found [here](#). Also consider adjusting your screen settings. The [night light](#) feature on a PC helps to reduce the amount of blue light. On a Mac, you can try the [dark mode](#) setting.

Lighting – overhead lighting or natural light are the best sources of light for computer work. If these are insufficient you may wish to consider task lighting which can provide targeted illumination for paper documents and reading without decreasing the clarity of your screen images.

Workstation set-up - position screens approximately an arm's length away and at just below your line of vision.

For additional assistance please contact Environmental & Occupational Health Support Services (EOHSS) – ehss@mcmaster.ca