The amount of people who work at computers and spend long stretches of their days sitting at a desk has increased exponentially in recent history.

In the office, the rise of the computer age has led to amazing increases in productivity and performance. One person can do complex calculations or tasks in a single moment, which may have taken a team of people months to accomplish in the past.

When it comes to entertainment and being creative, there's an unlimited amount of shows, movies, songs, and videos to consume. You can play games in real time with somebody on the other side of the world, and even earn a career as a professional gamer or a content creator by forging your own audience.

It's no wonder people are spending so much time at their desks and looking at screens.

All these amazing things come with a price, and it's not just the cost of buying the computer itself, it goes beyond a monetary toll.

There are a number of health risks and conditions that can arise from long hours of working, gaming, or creating on a computer (or any other electronic device that has you sitting at a desk, staring at a screen for extended periods of time.)

There are also a lot of things you can do to prevent most of these health risks, and steps you can take to help alleviate them once they occur.

Let's go over some of the issues you may run into...

Computer Vision Syndrome

Also known as eye strain, the Mayo clinic reports that this can be caused by prolonged use of computer screens.

Symptoms of computer vision syndrome include sore eyes, tired eyes, having trouble focusing your vision, feeling the need to rub your eyes, and blurred vision.

This puts a lot of stress and strain on your eyes, and some people will even experience eye twitching, which is caused by the stress.

Reducing the brightness of your device can help reduce the amount of strain on your eyes.

Also, there are apps like flux which change the tone of your display to remove blue light from the color spectrum, gradually, as the night progresses, and is intended to reduce strain, and to make it easier to get to sleep too. Device manufacturers are starting to offer this feature built-in, which is a great step.

There are also computer glasses that you can purpose, or even coatings that you can get on your next set of prescription glasses, designed to filter out certain frequencies of light omitted by the monitor to prevent them from reaching your eyes.

One of the best things that you can do is simply to take more breaks from staring at the screen.

There's a technique called 20-20-20, in which you take 20 seconds to look at an object that is roughly 20 feet away from you, and you do this exercise once every 20 minutes.

This routine gives your eyes a break from focusing only on things that are right in front of you, and often rest can be one of the most helpful techniques in reducing and preventing eye strain.

If you still experience issues, it could be the result of an underlying eye problem and you should visit a healthcare professional.

Back Pain and Poor Posture

We've covered some of the issues with looking at a screen for too long, now let's take a look at another very common complaint from people who sit for too long.

The first issue with sitting too long is that it's just bad for your posture, especially when you start to slump in the seat, or sit on top of your legs, or generally just get into any more comfortable position.

Sitting with great posture doesn't feel natural for many people, so it's something you need to force yourself to do at first.

If you're sitting at a desk for such an extended period of time that you need to slouch to get more comfortable, that in and of itself is a good sign that it's time to stand up, walk around a bit, just loosen up and get the blood flowing.

In addition to poor posture, sitting too long can also cause all sorts of back pain. You should be sitting with your feet flat on the floor, in a chair that supports your lower back, and making a point to stand up and walk around at least once or twice an hour, if not more.

You can do this along with your 20-20-20 eye exercise, and taking a small break occasionally can also help to keep you better focused. There's a technique called the Pomodoro method that involves taking small breaks from your work a few times every hour, and it's been shown to help with overall focus and productivity.

Standing while you work can help alleviate many of the posture and back issues, but it's not always practical. More and more offices are making standing desks an option, or desks that can convert from sitting to standing.

Now, let's take a closer look at some of the different products that can help, including some that we've already mentioned.

Standing Desks: This is the standard when it comes to avoiding sitting. It does take some getting used to, but you can either buy one, make your own, or check out these attachments that sit on top of your desk and allow a regular desk to convert from sitting to standing in just a few seconds. You can even just stack a few feet of bricks, milk crates, or anything else under your existing desk to boost it up to standing height.

Ball & Other Alternative Chairs: Switching from sitting all day to standing all day can be a daunting task, and frankly uncomfortable and hard to get used to. It's not a bad idea to start by standing just a little bit at a time, but another alternative is to check out some different types of chairs. A ball chair is basically just an inflatable rubber exercise ball that you sit on, it helps to engage your core and forces you to sit with better posture. Kneeling chairs are another alternative, which take a lot of the pressure off your lower back.

Desk Exercise Equipment: Some people will install a set of bike pedals at their feet to keep the blood flowing while they work, and to get in a bit of exercise. Treadmill desks are also starting to get more and more popular, basically it's a treadmill that sits flat (Without the vertical part that has handles, and a display) so that it can slide right up to a standing desk, so that you can have a slow walk while working at your desk. There are also units available where the desk and the treadmill are built into one.

Computer Glasses: As discussed earlier, there are special glasses that can help filter the harmful lights from the spectrum that your computer displays, helping to reduce eye strain.

Conclusion & Final Thoughts:

At the end of the day, when it comes to the most common health issues you'll encounter from sitting at a desk for a prolonged period, they're easily solved by taking more breaks, doing a few simple exercises, and just having a general awareness of your body and how it's feeling. Listen to your body.

Of course, there are many more serious health issues that can arise from sitting too much, or staring at screens too often, in the long term. Cardiovascular health is a real concern for people who are sitting too often, and living a sedentary lifestyle.

If your job requires you to sit at a desk for most of the day, it's important to take breaks, but also to compensate for that in your free time with exercise and movement.

If you're experiencing any serious symptoms of anything we've discussed, or if these tips don't end up solving your issues, it would be wise to visit your health care professional to ensure that there isn't something more serious going on.