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Glaucoma
Cataracts
Diabetic Eye Disease
Laser Surgery

Accommodative Spasm

Accommodative spasm is a condition in which the eye muscles automatically focus more than is necessary for a given stimulus. Symptoms include blurry vision, fluctuating vision, headaches/eyestrain, ineffective spectacle correction, and unstable responses during an eye exam.

Patients with accommodative spasm have a difficult time relaxing their focusing muscles when transitioning from near to far, so they may complain of blurred distance vision after a period of near work. This happens because their eyes are still focusing for their near vision task, even though they are now looking at a farther distance. After discontinuing the near work, the distance vision gradually improves as the eye muscles eventually relax and allow the distance to become clear.

Accommodative spasm is often seen in young patients and is most common for individuals who frequently perform extended near tasks such as staring at a computer screen, tablet or cell phone. Typically, this condition improves slowly with aging as the ability to focus up close gradually lessens.

Taking visual breaks is helpful to reduce the symptoms that occur with mild accommodative spasm. The general rule for visual breaks while performing computer and near work is 20/20/20: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away, for 20 seconds to help reduce potential eyestrain. Visual breaks may not be enough to treat significant accommodative spasm and the doctor may prescribe bifocal, progressive, or antifatigue glasses. These lenses allow for patients to relax their eye muscles while doing near work so that when they then switch their focus to distance, vision remains clear. Please ask your doctor if you have any questions about this condition.

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