

Lighting

The Pitfalls of Overhead Lighting

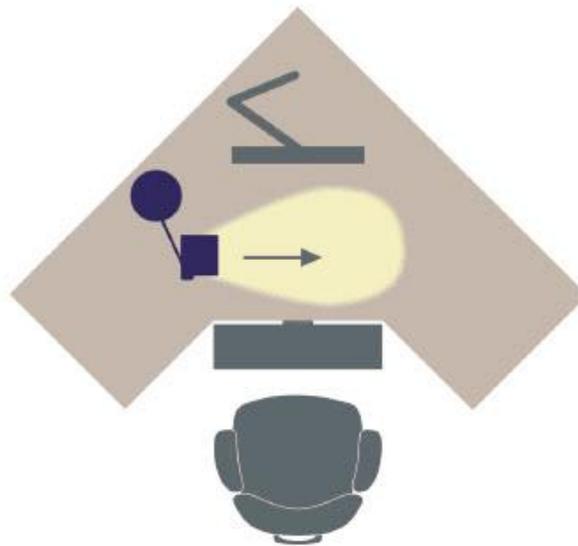
Overhead fluorescent lighting has a number of features that can lead to ergonomic problems. The first is that the level of light is not adjustable at an individual level. This can become a serious issue when you have multiple people in the same space whose eyes require different amounts of light. The plain and simple truth is that everyone's eyes are unique and require different lighting for optimal sight. Also, individuals need different amounts of light throughout the day depending on what task they are focused on.



The environmental impact of overhead lighting is not insignificant either. Much of the light cast by overheads is lost to the space above your eyes; whereas ergonomic desk lamps can focus 100% of their light directly where it belongs- on your desk. By some estimates, dual components lighting, where a less substantial amount of overhead lighting is used in tandem with desk lighting, uses 30-40% less energy than overhead lighting.

Contrasting Light Requirements: Your Desk vs. Your Monitor

As mentioned earlier, multi-tasking is one contemporary feature of the workplace and the home that only reinforces the need for more ergonomic lighting. You might find yourself frequently changing your line of sight from your computer monitor to the documents, papers, and books on your desk.



This creates a regular strain on your eyes since they are constantly switching back and forth from the brightness of your screen to the relative darkness of your desk. Monitors generate light, while paper reflects light; in fact, reading paper documents requires 4-5 times more light than reading a computer monitor. As you might imagine, this frequent back and forth adjustment on the eyes is not very desirable.

The solution is not hard to guess- increase the amount of light delivered to your desk surface so that your paper documents are better illuminated. An ergonomic light should always be adjustable and let you decide where the its light falls across your desk. This also saves energy and reduces the strain on your eyes.

Ergonomic Lighting Tips

- Position your desk lamp such that its light sweeps across your viewing area
- Try and find an ergonomic desk lamp that has multiple pivot points for extra adjustability
- Place the lamp opposite your writing hand to minimize shadows on your work surface
- Minimize any direct glare by angling the shade light away from your eyes

Vision as a Function of Age

Not surprisingly, there is a negative correlation between age and the ability to see clearly. This means that more contrast, between objects is needed over time in order to differentiate them. In order to achieve more contrast, more light is needed. This means that the need for ergonomic lighting increases exponentially after the age of 40; while most of us can get away with overhead lighting in our youth, the need for better lighting only increases with age.

Finding an Ergonomic Desk Lamp

What should you look for in your ergonomic light? Good question- but a few of the features you should be looking for include a flexible design, adjustable light intensity, and easily adjustable positioning. Note that the qualities of an ergonomic light revolve around the idea of versatility/flexibility.