

Stay Healthy

TLC for Tech-Tired Eyes



Technology has expanded our world, but are our eyes paying the price?

By Sheryl Kraft

It's hard to avoid technology, with TVs, tablets, computers and mobile phones playing such a big part of our everyday lives—especially during quarantine.

American adults spend almost half of each day interacting with screens, with those 60 and older devoting an extra half hour each day compared to 10 years ago. But are these blue-light-emitting devices wrecking our health?

The truth is, exposure to blue light can affect our sleep patterns. That's because its short wavelength can delay the release of melatonin, a natural hormone that prepares the body for sleep, and shift our internal clock (circadian rhythm) to a later schedule, pushing bedtime

later than optimal. The healthy fix is to turn off electronics an hour before bed. But when it comes to our eyes, it's another story.

"Many people think there's a direct correlation between blue light and eye damage," says Rishi Singh, M.D., a retinal specialist and staff surgeon at the Cole Eye Institute at Cleveland Clinic. Yet the actual amount of blue light emitted from electronic devices is quite small and has not been shown to be harmful to our eyes, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

"It's not a blue light phenomenon, but instead a screen phenomenon," Singh says. It's how we use our screens and how much time we spend using them that

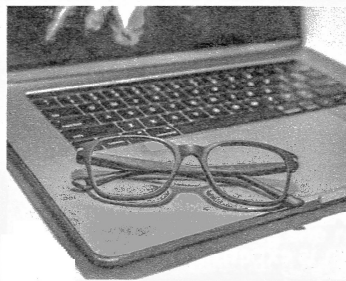
could be problematic.

Good screen hygiene can go a long way toward easing problems from screen exposure, including eyestrain or fatigue, blurred vision, headache and dry, irritated, itchy or red eyes.

Blink On average, we blink about 15 times per minute. But when we stare at our screens, our blink rate gets cut roughly in half. Blinking is beneficial to the eyes, bathing and moisturizing them and supplying nutrients. Less blinking equals dry, irritated eyes.

Look Away Singh recommends the "20-20-20" rule: Look away from your screen every 20 minutes and focus on an object 20 feet away from you for at least 20 seconds.

Lubricate Eye drops can ease dryness.



Wear Your Glasses Swap contact lenses for glasses while using the computer. Contacts can dry out and irritate your eyes, especially if you're not blinking enough.

Avoid Glare Move your computer away from windows or light sources that are directly in front of or behind your monitor. A matte filter

may also help avoid glare, which can cause you to squint (and can result in headaches).

Distance Yourself Sit about 25 inches (or arm's length) away from the screen and position your screen's height so you're looking slightly downward at it.

Can Blue Light Cause Age-Related Macular Degeneration?

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) occurs when a portion of the retina, called the macula, becomes damaged. The condition, which can evolve from a dry to a more serious wet form, prevents you from seeing fine details and affects your central vision while keeping your peripheral (side) vision intact.

Blue light passes through the cornea and lens and ultimately reaches the retina, and some research suggests that this light may lead to, or worsen, AMD. But many experts say that the blue light you need to worry about comes from the sun, not your electronic devices (which is why they advise everyone to wear UV-blocking sunglasses).

In fact, experts at Harvard Medical School say that factors like aging, smoking, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure or being overweight are far more significant than exposure to blue light in the development of AMD.

Visit Parade.com/eyes to find out why your eyes are crusty when you wake up in the morning.