5 Tips to Help Reduce Digital Eye Strain

How many hours a day do you spend staring at a screen? An hour? Three to four hours? More? According to recent findings from The Vision Council, 60% of Americans spend five or more hours a day with their eyes fixed on a smartphone, tablet, or computer screen*.

And why wouldn't they? Today's world runs on digital. From the living room to the board room, we rely on our devices to stay informed, connect with others, and in many cases, earn a living. Mobile devices and computers deliver countless benefits. However, they can also serve up a less beneficial side effect.

Many digital devices and computer monitors emit blue light, and blue light exposure can contribute to digital eye strain. Here's why: After blue light enters your eyes it scatters. Your eyes then have to work extra hard to focus that scattered light. In other words, your peepers are putting in overtime on a daily basis, which can contribute to repetitive eye strain and associated headaches, blurred vision, and dry eyes.

Device use isn't likely to dwindle any time soon and you're probably more likely to hand over the keys to your car than your smartphone. Therefore, it's vital to find other ways to cut back on your blue light intake. Consider the following five ways to reduce your blue light exposure and decrease the potential onset of digital eye strain.

1. Ask the expert (your eye doctor!)

An annual trip to the eye doctor is critical for the entire family (especially children). Ask your VSP eye doctor about the best options to help you or your children reduce eye strain, whether that's in the form of computer vision or blue light lenses. Even if you don't wear corrective lenses, some blue light coatings can be applied to non-prescription eyewear.

2. Observe the 20-20-20 rule

Give your eyes a break every 20 minutes and spend 20 seconds looking at something at least 20 feet away. Also, blinking more often helps to moisten your eyes, which may help reduce visual discomfort.

3. Maintain your digital distance

Find a comfortable working distance from your screen. This is especially important for children since the intensity of light increases exponentially the closer our eyes are to the source. Children have shorter arms and therefore receive a more intense dose of blue light from devices. Children should hold devices as far away from their eyes as is comfortable. Adults are encouraged to hold devices at arm's length.

4. Dim the lights

Turn down the brightness level of device screens to reduce the amount of blue light exposure, especially during the evening hours. Additionally, as LED and CFL lighting also emit blue light, it would be a good idea to dim those at home or work if possible.

5. There's an app for that

A number of apps are also available to help reduce blue light emission from devices.

*Source: * The Vision Council, EYES OVEREXPOSED: The Digital Dilemma, 2016,*