

Screens and Your Eyes





Screens are everywhere— phones, computers, tablets, TVs, and even smart-watches.

They help us work, learn, and stay connected. But spending long hours looking at screens can make your eyes feel tired, dry, or uncomfortable. This doesn't cause permanent damage, but it can affect how your eyes feel, and how well you can concentrate and see during the day.

The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to keep your eyes healthy and comfortable while using screens.

How Screens Affect Your Eyes

Your eyes constantly focus and refocus when you look at a screen. They move back and forth, adjust to changing light, and work harder when reading small print or bright images.

After long periods, this effort can lead to digital **eye strain**, sometimes called **computer vision syndrome (CVS)**

Common symptoms of CVS include:

- Tired or sore eyes
- Blurry vision
- Headaches
- Dry, itchy, or watery eyes
- Neck or shoulder pain
- Trouble focusing after looking away from the screen



These symptoms often improve when you rest your eyes or take breaks from screen use.

Why Eye Strain Happens

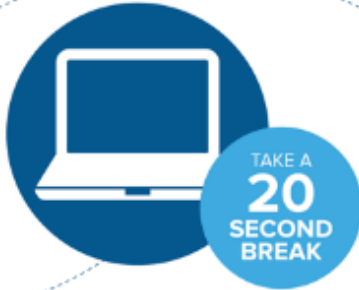


Several factors cause digital eye strain:

- **Blinking less:** When looking at screens, people blink about half as often as usual. Blinking keeps eyes moist, so less blinking means dry, irritated eyes.
- **Close-up focus:** Reading or working up close makes your eye muscles work harder.
- **Glare and lighting:** Bright screens or reflections can make your eyes strain to see clearly.
- **Poor posture:** Sitting too close, too far, or at the wrong height can make focusing more difficult.
- **Non-optimal vision correction:** If your glasses or contacts aren't up to date, your eyes need to work even harder.

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TO PREVENT DIGITAL EYE STRAIN



Visit www.aoa.org for more tips on how to protect your eye health and to find a doctor of optometry near you for your annual comprehensive eye exam.

AMERICAN OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

The 20-20-20 Rule

One of the easiest ways to give your eyes a break is the 20-20-20 rule:

Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

This relaxes your focusing muscles and helps prevent fatigue. You can even set a reminder on your phone or computer until it becomes a habit.

Set Up Your Screen for Comfort

How you use your screen makes a big difference. Here are a few tips:

- Keep your screen at arm's length (about 50–70 cm away).
- The top of the screen should be at or slightly below eye level.
- Adjust brightness so it matches the light in the room—neither too bright nor too dim.
- Reduce glare by using a matte screen filter or positioning your screen away from windows or bright lights. Use a blue-filter setting, particularly in late evening.
- Increase text size if you find yourself peering at the screen.

Small adjustments can greatly reduce eye fatigue over time.

Keep Your Eyes Moist

Dry eyes are one of the most common complaints during screen use.

To help:

- **Blink often**—try to remind yourself consciously.
- **Use artificial tears** (lubricating eye drops) if your eyes feel dry or burning.
- **Humidify your workspace** if the air is dry.
- **Avoid air conditioning** directly on your eyes, or wear computer glasses to shield them
- **Drink plenty of water** to keep your whole body hydrated



If you wear glasses or contacts, make sure your prescription is up to date.

Some people benefit from **computer glasses**, designed to be used at a comfortable distance from the screen. These can reduce strain during long work sessions.

If you're unsure, ask your optometrist—simple adjustments can make a big difference.



Screen Use in Children: Advice for Parents

Children today grow up surrounded by screens, so the goal is not to avoid them completely, but to use them in a healthy and balanced way. Current advice focuses less on strict time limits and more on how, when, and why screens are used.

For very young children (under 18 months), screens should generally be avoided, except for video calls with family. For **ages 2 to 5**, screen use should be **limited to about one hour per day**, and it should be high-quality, educational content watched together with a parent.

For older children, there is no single “safe” number of hours. Instead, parents should make sure screen time **does not replace sleep, outdoor play, schoolwork, or family time.**

Simple habits can make a big difference:

- Keep screens out of bedrooms, especially at night
- Avoid screens during mealtimes
- Encourage regular breaks and outdoor activity
- Watch or use screens together when possible

Most importantly, parents should **set a good example.** Children often copy adult habits, so balanced screen use at home helps them develop healthy lifelong behaviours.

Blue Light: Should You Worry?

Screens give off blue light with short wavelengths, which has raised concerns about its effects on eye health and sleep patterns.



Current research shows that blue light from screens does not damage the eyes, but it **can affect sleep patterns** if you use screens late at night.

To help your sleep:

- Use a night mode or blue light filter on your devices in the evening.
- Try to limit screen time for at least an hour before bed.
- Use glasses with a **blue-blocking filter** to cut the short wavelength blue light.

When to See an Eye Care Professional

If you experience frequent headaches, blurred vision, or ongoing eye discomfort, it's a good idea to book an eye exam. Your optometrist can rule out other issues and recommend personalized solutions.

In Summary

Screens are a part of modern life, but your eyes don't have to suffer.

By following the 20-20-20 rule, setting up your workspace properly, keeping your eyes hydrated and taking regular breaks, you can stay comfortable and always see well.

Healthy screen habits today help ensure your eyes stay healthy and comfortable tomorrow.