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EYE CARE

Protecting your eyes from digital eyestrain and blue light

Anna Pinera, Vice President of Operations

People usually think of eye-related dangers in the workplace as being caused by machinery, chemicals, or construction materials. However, there are growing dangers to the eyes that most of us don't think about – digital eyestrain and blue light exposure.

Digital eyestrain is the pain that someone may feel after prolonged exposure to digital screens, including computers, tablets, flat screen TVs and cell phones. Symptoms of digital eyestrain include blurry vision, difficulty in focusing, dry and irritated eyes, headaches, or neck and back pain.

Sunlight is the main source of blue light, the part of the visible light spectrum that gives off a blue color. However, as digital screen technology has evolved over the years, many of today's electronic devices use LED back-light technology to enhance screen brightness and clarity. These LEDs emit very strong blue light waves. Although it's only a fraction of what the sun transmits, the amount of time we spend using these devices and how close the screens are to our faces have health care professionals concerned about possible long-term effects of blue light on eye health.

There is growing medical evidence that prolonged blue light exposure may cause permanent eye damage. Blue light exposure contributes to the destruction of the cells in the center of the retina, which can lead to vision loss and increase a person's risk of macular degeneration later in life.

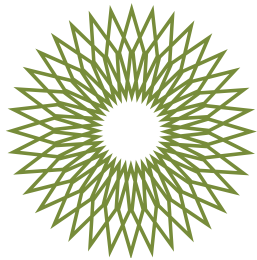
Since many adults also work at jobs that require the prolonged use of a computer, tablet or other digital monitor, blue light is becoming a considerable threat to vision health.

There are ways we can reduce digital eyestrain and blue light exposure. They include the following:

- Use computer eyeglasses, specialized lenses, and blue light protective coatings.
- Change the computer screen's brightness to lower glare and eliminate harsh reflections.
- Attach a glare reduction filter to the computer screen.
- Adjust the text size on the computer screen.

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- Remind yourself to blink more often. Staring at a digital screen can cause dry eye syndrome. Over-the-counter drops and proper hydration can help.
- Keep handheld devices at a safe distance, just below eye level.
- Have regular eye exams as part of healthy vision maintenance.
- The 20/20/20 rule still applies: After every 20 minutes of computer-related tasks, look at something beyond 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

The advancement of digital technology, both in our jobs and daily lives, signifies we will continue to become more reliant upon it. It is important for each one of us to be proactive and practice good eye care to preserve our vision.

Anna Pinera is the Vice President of National Network Management of Premier Eye Care. Premier is recognized by its partners as being the national leader in providing quality, innovative and affordable solutions for managed medical and routine eye care. More information about Premier is available at www.premiereyecare.net.

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