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Blue-Blocker Glasses – What are they and do you really need them?

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I think by now, most people are familiar with what blue-blockers are – glasses that filter out the blue light that emits from screens on computers, phones, and tablets. People are more than ever opting for these, often prescription-free, glasses to help protect their eyes from blue light.

Given how life has changed in the last year with the pandemic, more and more people are spending increased time on their computers be it from working remotely to online school, video-chatting, attending virtual conferences, baby showers, weddings, happy hours, or just out of sheer boredom. This is leading to more patients reporting issues with their eyes and vision. This is called "digital eye strain". According to Dr. Nicky Shah, MD [1] symptoms of digital eye strain include heavy, tired eyes, dryness, burning, or itching. This can also lead to a lack of proper sleep.

So how do you fix the problem? Well, the easy answer that a lot of doctors give is – blue- blocker glasses. But do you need them?

The amount of radiation that is emitted from a screen has never been demonstrated to cause lasting harm to your eyes – unlike UV radiation from the sun. There are no confirmative studies that suggest screen light can lead to any eye diseases as which was thought before.
According to 360 Research Reports [2], it is expected that blue blocker sales will reach $28M by 2024, up from $19M in 2019. That's a lot of eyewear!

What's really going on is you are focused on your screen, possibly sitting too close, not blinking or looking away. When your eyes are concentrated on something close, you are not blinking as much, thus not lubricating your eyes. When you blink, the muscles around your eyes milk the oils from the meibomian glands to the surface of the eyes to help lubricate.

How to prevent digital eye strain instead of resulting in getting a snazzy new pair of glasses? Dr. Shah recommends practicing "20-20-20". Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds. While you are at it, stand up and stretch too. Also, adjust the brightness on your screen to a more comfortable level. If need be, use lubricating eye drops. Avoid using devices in dark rooms and reduce the glare on

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screens. The AAO [3] adds that you should sit about 25 inches from your screen (about arm's length), if you wear contacts, give your eyes a break, and wear your glasses. Lastly, for better sleep, the National Sleep Foundation [4] recommends turning off the screen (including TV) 30 minutes before bed.

If you still feel you are having problems with your eyes, contact your ophthalmologist to get a baseline exam done to see if you need prescription computer eyeglasses. You may find you don't need the fancy blue-blockers after all.

Thank you for reading… now cast your eyes away from your screen!

Dr. Zimmerman

References

1. Dr. Shetal "Nicky" Shah, MD, Eye Surgeon & Board Certified Ophthalmologist sightmd.com – from Aug 24, 2020, IG post from "@chiefeyeofficer".
2. 360 Research Reports
3. American Academy of Ophthalmologists
4. National Sleep Foundation

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