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PROTECT YOUR VISION WHILE STAYING AT HOME

Tips to safeguard your sight as many see an increase in screen time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MADISON, WI – With more and more work, school, and social events moving to virtual platforms, we are regularly staring at digital devices for extended periods of time. Doing this so frequently can have a negative impact on our vision and eye health. According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) Tenth Annual American Eye-Q® survey, 58 percent of adults report experiencing eye strain or vision problems as a direct result of using technology including computers, smartphones, and digital devices. With no end in sight to the COVID pandemic, digital device use is likely to continue increasing. As such, it is more important than ever for consumers to make smart choices when it comes to safeguarding their vision. The members of the Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) recommend consumers take steps to protect their vision and eye health when using computers and digital devices.

Give Your Eyes a Break when Using Computers and Digital Devices

Prolonged use of technology can cause Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS), which occurs when vision and eye health problems related to near work are experienced while using computers/digital devices. Constant eye activity increases the risk for CVS and can cause problems such as dry eye, eye strain, headaches, neck and/or backache, and fatigue. The WOA recommends people practice the "20/20/20 rule" when using computers and/or digital devices for an extended period of time: every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break, and look at something 20 feet away. People need to rest their eyes to keep them moist, and looking up from your computers and devices into the distance helps the eyes from locking into a close-up position.

"Although ongoing technology use doesn't permanently damage vision, regular and prolonged use of technology may lead to a temporary condition called digital eye strain," advises Dr. Amber Dentz, 2020 WOA President and Hartland, WI optometrist. "Symptoms can include burning or tired eyes, headaches, fatigue, loss of focus, blurred vision, double vision, and/or head and neck pain."

The WOA recommends the following guidelines to prevent or reduce vision and eye health problems associated with CVS:

- Computer screens should be about 4-5 inches below eye level as measured from the center of the screen and held 20-28 inches away from the eyes.
- The most efficient viewing angle on a computer screen is slightly downward about 15 degrees.
- If possible, windows or other light sources should not be directly visible when sitting in front of the monitor. If this occurs, turn the desk or computer to prevent glare on the screen.
- Reduce the amount of lighting in the room to match that of the computer screen.
- Avoid dry eye when using a computer or digital device by blinking frequently; this keeps the front surface of the eye moist.

Receive a Comprehensive Exam from Your Eye Doctor

When it comes to seeing what's going on with your eyes, there is no substitute for a comprehensive, yearly eye exam by a licensed eye doctor. Despite claims, there is truly no 'app' that can substitute for an eye doctor's services in vision and eye health care.

"Comprehensive, yearly eye exams preserve vision and constitute the only way to accurately assess eye health, diagnose an eye disorder or disease, and determine if you need corrective lenses," affirms Dr. Dentz.

To locate a nearby doctor of optometry, please visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members>.

About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at www.woa-eyes.org.

About the American Eye-Q® survey

The 10th annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From February 19-March 4, 2015, PSB conducted 1,000 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (margin of error is plus or minus 3.10 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.)