

GENERAL VISUAL HYGIENE SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

As schools choose virtual learning and device based instruction, and our children spend more and more time on computers, tablets and cell phones, it's important to educate ourselves and our children on how to maintain good eye health with increased screen time.

Digital Eye Strain, a group of symptoms that include sore, tired, dry, burning, or itching eyes, blurred or double vision, headache, and difficulty concentrating, often accompanies excessive screen use. They can be minimized or avoided by following these guidelines:

BLINKING- the eyes don't blink as often with extended reading and computer use. With each blink, a set of tears recoats the eye's fragile surface to help moisturize the eyes. Consider using OTC artificial tears as often as needed. Avoid eye drops that "get the red out" for long term or frequent use.

Working Distance- Use the "Harmon Distance" when reading, writing, and doing other close work. This is the distance between the child's fist with the first knuckle placed at his/her chin, and the tip of the elbow.

Location of computer screen- The computer screen should be 15-20 degrees below eye level (about 4-6 inches) as measured from the center of the top of the screen and 20-28 inches from the eyes.

Good Lighting- may help to reduce glare and eyestrain.

20/20/20- Every 20 minutes take at least 20 seconds to focus on an object 20 feet away. Take a few moments to breathe deeply and blink.

Posture- Maintain a comfortable erect posture when reading, allowing for full breaths and an open periphery. Do not read lying on your stomach or on your side.

Outdoor play and activities- recent studies point towards a nearsightedness/electronic device connection. A year-long study posted in *Ophthalmology* (August 2018), found that those students who had been encouraged to spend at least 11 hours per week outdoors, had significantly less myopia (nearsightedness).

When to Stop- stop the use of computers, smart phones, tablets, etc. at least one hour before going to sleep. Using electronic devices before bedtime can be physiologically and psychologically stimulating in ways that can adversely affect sleep.

Shared from Dr. Sinoway Developmental Optometrist II-2020