

# Eye on Health



## Digital Devices And Children's Eye Health

(NAPSA)—Spending too much time in front of a computer screen can present a number of challenges for young people, including eye strain and blurred vision. Fortunately, experts say taking a few simple steps can help to protect eye health.

That's useful news for parents who may be underestimating the time their children are spending on digital devices, according to a pair of surveys by the American Optometric Association (AOA).

The first survey found that 83 percent of children between the ages of 10 and 17 say they use an electronic device for at least three hours each day. However, a separate AOA survey revealed that only 40 percent of parents believe their children use an electronic device for that same amount of time.

This may indicate that parents are more likely to overlook warning signs associated with vision problems due to technology use. For example, digital eye strain, a temporary condition caused by prolonged technology use, can cause children to experience burning, itchy or tired eyes, headaches, fatigue and blurred vision.

### Safety Tips

To protect their vision, children should practice the 20-20-20 rule: Take a 20-second break, every 20 minutes, and view something 20 feet away.

The following recommendations can also help prevent or reduce digital eye strain:

- Position computer screens four to five inches below eye level and 20 to 28 inches away from the eyes. Digital devices should be held slightly below eye level.

- Prevent glare on the screen by turning your desk or computer



**Digital eye strain can cause children to experience burning, itchy or tired eyes, headaches, fatigue and blurred vision.**

away from windows or other light sources.

- Match the room lighting to the computer screen by substituting a lower-watt overhead light or using a dimmer switch.

- Adjust font sizes to make text bigger and easier to read.

- Blink frequently to minimize the chances of developing dry eye.

Many optometrists are also concerned about high-energy, short-wavelength blue and violet light emitted from everyday electronic devices. Research shows that overexposure to blue light could contribute to eye strain and discomfort and may lead to serious conditions such as age-related macular degeneration.

### Regular Exams Are Key

The AOA recommends that every child have an eye exam by an optometrist soon after 6 months of age and before age 3 and every year thereafter. The Pediatric Essential Health Benefit in the Affordable Care Act now provides children through age 18 with yearly comprehensive eye exams.

To find an optometrist, or for additional information on children's vision and the importance of back-to-school eye exams, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org).