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**Looks Like the Home Office is Here to Stay. Here’s How to Protect Your Eyes**

*The Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Academy of Ophthalmology offers tips for easing eye strain from too much screen time*

**Kimberly, WI** – As home and office space merged during the pandemic, many people said they spent more time in front of screens and suffered because of it. They complained of eye strain, headaches, and dry eye, and worried that they might be doing permanent damage to their vision. A [survey suggests that two-thirds](https://www.businessinsider.com/survey-over-two-thirds-of-companies-work-from-home-forever-2020-6#:~:text=A%20survey%20finds%20more%20than,be%20working%20from%20home%20forever&text=A%20new%20survey%20from%20451,place%20for%20the%20long%20term.) of businesses expect that their temporary work-from-home policies will become permanent. In honor of March’s designation as Workplace Eye Wellness Month, the [Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology](https://www.wieyemd.org/) and the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](http://www.aao.org/) are sharing tips on how to create a comfortable work environment at home to avoid digital eye strain.

[Digital eye strain](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-eye-strain) is a group of eye problems that can happen after staring at a screen for too long. The symptoms include [blurry vision](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/symptoms/blurriness-2), headaches, and tired, [dry eye](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/diseases/what-is-dry-eye)s. It happens because we blink less often when using screens. Blinking is important because it keeps the surface of the eye moisturized. Extended reading, writing or other intensive near work can also cause eye strain.

“Screen time is a necessary part of our everyday lives, and too much time on our computers and smartphones is a common drawback in today’s world. However, there are easy things we can do to lessen digital eye strain and the nagging symptoms that come with it,” said David Nash, M.D., President of the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology. “[Digital eye strain](https://kraffeye.com/blog/computer-vision-syndrome-causes-symptoms-and-treatment) is not something people usually think about until it affects them, but when it happens, addressing the issue is all about active prevention.”

Please find below some key tips in preventing eye strain and other symptoms from too much screen time:

1. **Make taking breaks a habit**. Practicing the [20-20-20 rule](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/computer-usage) will help you remember to blink. Set a timer on your phone or watch to remind you to look 20 feet away every 20 minutes for 20 seconds. This can be as simple as looking away from your computer screen or out the window. If you’re not in the middle of a Zoom call, you can also just shut your eyes for 20 seconds.
2. **Practice eye ergonomics.**Sit 18 to 25 inches away from your computer screen, about arm’s length. Adjust screen brightness and contrast so that it feels comfortable. Also, position the screen so your eyes gaze slightly downward, not straight ahead or up.
3. **Use artificial tears.**[Eye drops](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/treatments/lubricating-eye-drops) will help keep your eyes moist and relieve the discomfort of dry eye. These can be bought over the counter without a prescription.
4. **Consider a humidifier.**A humidifier will add moisture to the air and minimize dry eye. This is especially good for people who live in cold areas and use heaters often.
5. **Consider computer glasses.** If you have trouble seeing your screen, ask your doctor about [computer glasses](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/glasses-contacts/glasses). These progressive lenses are specifically designed for focusing on computer screens, which are usually positioned about 20 to 26 inches away from the face.
6. **Skip the blue light-blocking glasses.**The American Academy of Ophthalmology does not recommend [blue light-blocking glasses](https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/are-computer-glasses-worth-it) because there is no scientific evidence that blue light coming from a computer screen causes digital eye strain or damages the eye.

If symptoms continue after trying these tips, please see your ophthalmologist.

“The good news is that looking at a computer, tablet or smartphone for long periods of time will *not* cause permanent damage,” said Dianna Seldomridge, MD, clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. “As we’ve all experienced, staring at a screen for too long can cause some uncomfortable symptoms. But there are some simple changes you can make to ease the discomfort.”

For more information about eye health, visit the Academy’s EyeSmart [website](https://www.aao.org/eye-health).

**About the Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology**

The Wisconsin Academy of Ophthalmology (WAO) is a professional medical society comprised of Wisconsin ophthalmologists (medical eye doctors) who are committed to promoting quality eye care for the citizens of Wisconsin by providing its members with resources including professional education, legislative advocacy, and membership services to enhance the practice of ophthalmology in Wisconsin.

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