

Keeping an eye on it!

September 2020 by Steven Dunwell

It seems that everyone is staring at some kind of screen these days, be it a computer, phone, tablet or other digital device. And it can cause a condition called “digital eye strain”. Symptoms can include eye fatigue and discomfort, dry eyes, headaches, blurred vision, neck and shoulder pain, eye twitching and red eyes.

Here are a few tips and simple exercise along with some computer apps to help those tired eyes.

Blink more, move your eyes and take a break

Blink

Blinking is very important when working at a computer as it moistens your eyes to prevent dryness and irritation. When staring at a screen for a prolonged period, people tend to blink only about one-third as often as they normally do. To reduce the risk of your eyes drying out, try this exercise: Every 20 minutes, blink 10 times by closing your eyes as if falling asleep. This will help remoisten your eyes.

Look into the distance

Another cause of digital eye strain is something called “focusing fatigue”, this is caused by constantly focusing on your screen for long periods. Try to look away from your computer at least every 20 minutes and gaze at a distant object (the sea, a nice glass of wine or even a loved one), at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This is known as the “20-20-20 rule”. Looking far away relaxes the focusing muscle inside the eyes.

Take a Break

To reduce the risk of eye fatigue along with reducing pain in neck, back and shoulders, take frequent breaks away from the screen (aim for at least one 10-minute break every hour). Stand up, move about and stretch your arms, legs, back, neck and shoulders to reduce tension and muscle fatigue.

A nice warm glow

Apple and Microsoft supply free tools to help with digital eye strain. These tools help by moving the colours shown on the computer screen to the warmer end of the spectrum, removing the harsher blues, which is easier on the eye, especially at night.

Apple Mac OS X (Sierra and later)

Choose Apple menu (🍏) > System Preferences, then click Displays.



Click the Night Shift tab, follow the on-screen instructions

Apple iPhone and iPad

Go to Settings > Display & Brightness.

Drag the slider to the right or left to adjust the brightness or turn the Night Shift option on.

Microsoft Windows 10

Click on the Action Centre icon bottom right corner of the screen  and select the Night Light icon  to turn the function on and off.