

> VISION REHABILITATION NEWS



A WORD FROM OUR DOCTORS

regarding excessive screen time



Due to the significant increase in screen time during the pandemic, we have dedicated this issue of our newsletter to what you can do about the impact excess digital viewing is having on both children and adults.

If you would like a zoom session or in-person in-service, please contact: dr.gentrup@sdvisions.com.

TIPS FOR EXCESS SCREEN TIME

With most everyone using computers and digital technology more than ever, it is important to understand that our eyes are not designed to be focused on a computer screen for hours at a time.

Signs that you or one of your clients has been looking at digital devices too long, or has difficulty looking at a computer screen, tablet or smart phone, include:

- eyes feel strained and tired
- dry eyes
- headaches
- sensitivity to light
- neck pain
- blurred vision
- loss of productivity
- decreased vision at night

One of the causes of visual stress is the working distance required to use a variety of digital devices. Special lenses can be prescribed that are designed to help reduce the strain. Make sure to have your clients inform our doctors of the actual distance between their eyes and their computer monitor when they come in for their appointment.

USE THE 20-20-20 RULE

If it is possible, reduce the time spent on digital devices and computers and apply the 20-20-20 rule:

Take a break every 20 minutes and look 20 feet away for 20 seconds



The easiest way to implement this is to set a timer when sitting down to work on a computer or digital device.



Dr. Ashley
Gentrup

Dr. Angela
Gulbranson

Dr. Jennifer
Hupke

SIGNS THAT A VISION PROBLEM MAY BE INTERFERING WITH LEARNING

Children (and adults) with eye movement, tracking and eye coordination problems may also have difficulty understanding the visual information on computers, tablets or smart phones. But, because children do not always know how they are supposed to see, they do not complain. As a result, in many cases these vision problems are easily mistaken for attention and learning problems because the symptoms are very similar.

In fact, research has shown that many children who have ADHD also have an eye coordination problem (convergence insufficiency) that contributes to their difficulties with reading and learning. In addition, research has also shown that the majority of children with Dyslexia have eye coordination (convergence insufficiency), focusing (accommodative dysfunction) and tracking problems (oculomotor dysfunction).



Here are some of the more common signs that a child may be struggling with eye movement, tracking and/or eye coordination problems, when reading or doing close work:

- Eyes feel tired, sore, uncomfortable and/or hurt
- Have headaches
- Feel sleepy
- Lose concentration
- Have trouble remembering what was read
- Have ghosting, shadowing or double vision
- Words move, jump, swim or appear to float on the page
- Assignments take longer than they should
- There feels like there is a "pulling" feeling around the eyes
- The words blur or come in and out of focus
- Lose place
- Need to reread the same line of words

In addition, some children might avoid doing schoolwork, even though they might enjoy playing video games for hours. If you or your client experience two or more of these symptoms on a regular basis, schedule an appointment with one of our doctors as soon as possible or share this newsletter.

INCREASED SCREEN TIME MAY CAUSE EYE TURNS

An article from Italy that talked about vision problems that occurred during lockdown for COVID-19 was published in the Pediatric Ophthalmology & Strabismus journal. It featured 4 children who all developed esotropia and diplopia as a result of spending too much time doing schoolwork, social media or playing on tablets, phones or computers.

The children included 2 girls, one 4 years old and the other 8 years old, along with 2 boys who were 16 years old. They all developed the esotropia after spending 8 to 10 hours a day using digital devices to play, access school lessons, and navigate social networks. The title of the article is: "Acute Acquired Concomitant Esotropia From Excessive Application of Near Vision During the COVID-19 Lockdown."

The article also referred to a study that found 12 teenagers who developed esotropia after using smartphones more than 4 hours a day from South Korea Department of Ophthalmology, Chonnam National University Medical School and Hospital, that was published in 2016.

Due to the fact that these cases were all due to near point stress and had a current onset with no other contributing conditions, surgery is often not the first treatment option. Our first treatment option typically involves lenses, prism and/or optometric vision therapy, depending on the severity of the turn.

> HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you find any recent onset of eye turns, and the patient has been using the digital devices for longer periods of time than prior to the pandemic, please consider referring for a binocular vision evaluation. Simply asking patients how long they are using computers and digital devices is a good start.

We can also ask these two questions:

Is there any kind of physical discomfort during or after reading or working on digital devices, such as headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, eye strain or rubbing your eyes?

Do you (or your child) dislike or avoid near activities such as reading, schoolwork, computer work, etc.?

A positive answer to either question indicates a binocular vision evaluation. If you have any questions about a client, either email or give us a call.