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Digital eye strain affecting children now more than ever

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The screen time can take a toll on children & wellbeing including their eyes



The current lock down due to COVID-19 pandemic has led to the biggest self-isolation India has ever witnessed. As activities have confined to the four walls of the house, work from home, online schooling has become an instant mantra. Children are spending more time than ever staring at digital screens like computers, tablets, TVs, smartphones, and other devices either for educational
purposes or just for fun. The screen time can take a toll on children & wellbeing including their eyes. Children who spend significantly more time on digital screen tend to have myopia and eye strain problems. Myopia can develop rapidly or even eventually. Children with myopia tend to experience a blurred or distorted vision, squinting or strained eyes and even headache.

Children might continue playing and watching with the gadgets without realising its impact on their eye, leading to discomfort to the eye. Keeping children engaged in activities away from screens is the biggest concern that requires careful attention from parents. It is important that parents pay special attention to avoid permanent vision problems.

Some of the steps that parents can take to prevent eye strain and to keep their child's eyes safe include:

Maintain Digital distance

Ensure that the screen is 20-26 inches away or at an arms' distance from your eyes and is also a bit below your eye level. Keep moderate brightness of the screens of your gadget. Adjust the brightness and contrast of the computer screen so that it feels comfortable to you. Blink regularly while you are in front of any digital screen as that will keep your eyes moist and healthier.

Encourage frequent visual breaks

One of the best things you can do to reduce your child's risk of digital eye strain is to get them to take break every 20 minutes. Rest your eyes for at least 20 seconds looking at something away from the screen. This will relax the focusing and eye alignment muscles, reducing the risk of many of the symptoms of digital eye strain.

Its a great idea to establish -free times each day to break your child's fixation on digital devices, reduce eye fatigue, and limit blue light exposure. Use this time to connect as a family. Parents should encourage their child to take breaks when using digital devices; make sure children dont put screens too close to their eyes, especially for long periods of time; and should ensure their child's workspace is set up properly with a chair promoting correct posture with feet flat on the floor.

Supervision

keeping an eye on how children are using their digital devices is very crucial to teach children to properly use them. Watching them while using devices will allow you to keep a careful watch on when they take breaks and how they decide when to put the devices down.
The best way is to expose children to as little screen time as possible. But if you allow your children to use devices, make sure they are learning to use them responsibly.

Education

As children get older and become capable of making important decisions, give them the freedom to choose wisely by educating them on the dangers of screens to their vision. Teach them how to determine when it's time to take a break and show them the joys of experiencing life outside of screens. Substitute reading an e-book with a real book and encourage kids to look out of the window
every two chapters. Continue to educate your child and encourage responsible behavior on digital devices.

Protective Eyewear

When it appears that the child is developing vision problems, you can provide your child with protective eyewear that filters the blue light that comes from screens after consulting the ophthalmologist. Their eyes will be protected from the discomfort and damage caused by blue light.

Digital devices have the power to teach our children incredible things, but they also come with inherent threat to the eyes, especially for kids. Taking these simple measures can help in keeping your tech-savvy child seeing clearly and comfortably. Supervision combined with education is very essential and remember to visit a vision therapy specialist post the lockdown for eye check-up.

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