



Sight-Harming Digital Devices & Children's Eyes: Information For National Eye Health Week

A recent survey found electronic devices are used for at least three hours a day by 83 percent of kids between 10 and 16 years old. Optometrist Mohammed Bhojani of Visual Answers Opticians in Loughborough explains more about the threat this poses.

LEICESTER, U.K. - Sept. 20, 2014 - [PRLog](#) -- Technology such as LED screens, computers, mobile phones, tablets, and even video games are such 'essentials' in our homes and even schools these days. It's no wonder that many of us who are parents don't know just how much time our children spending viewing electronic devices.

According to a recent survey conducted by the American Optometric Association, electronic devices are used for at least three hours a day by 83 percent of kids between 10 and 16 years old. Considering children in that age are in school for eight hours a day and should be sleeping for eight hours a night, that's an astounding amount of time between school and sleep that they are using some type of electronic device. It's likely to be a similar figure in the UK too. Many local schools over the last few years have now also introduced technology into the classroom too such as electronic white boards and more recently, personal tablets as teaching aids.

These findings were raised by optometrist Mohammed Bhojani of Visual Answers Opticians during **National Eye Health Week** because it's easy for busy parents to miss warning signs that their children may be suffering from 'digital eye strain' more commonly referred to as 'Computer Vision Syndrome'.

Vision Problems Associated with Technology Use

'Children may begin to experience soreness and burning sensation in their eyes and their eyes may get itchy or become tired. They may also start getting headaches, feeling fatigued, become unable to focus and have blurry vision', said Mohammed.

'While adults can experience these symptoms too, it's different for kids. Adults tend to be more self-aware, so if you had spent hours working on the computer and you began to feel tired or uncomfortable, you would likely stop what you were doing and take a break. Children however don't usually make that kind of connection. They don't always realise there's a problem and instead they just learn to work around their symptoms as if it was normal.'

Protecting Your Eyes From Digital Eye Strain

If kids are going to be using electronic devices for extended periods of time, they can avoid eye strain by following a few simple recommendations Mohammed suggests to his patients.

First, children should always use the **10-10-10 Rule**, which means every 10 minutes they should take a 10 second break from what they're doing and look at something 10 feet or more away. This will allow the eyes to relax and reduce the amount of strain they feel.

Parents should also reduce the glare on the computer screen for their kids by making sure the computer does not face a window and that there are no lamps or overhead lighting reflecting on the screen. The brightness of the computer screen should be equal to that of the brightness in the room. This should also be adjusted on smart phones that tend to be very bright.

Increasing the font size of the text on the screen will make reading much easier and will reduce eye strain too. Often changing the background colour of the screen can also help. Parents should also remind their children to blink regularly. *'Blinking gives your the eyes a break, allowing them to stay moist, and reduce the strain they are put under'*, said Mohammed.

Eye specialists are becoming increasingly concerned about the effects of the blue-violet light that is emitted from computers and other digital devices may have on the eyes. It can cause additional strain and discomfort and research has found that prolonged use may even lead to eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD) over time. Macular degeneration is the most common cause of blindness in the western world.

New findings from a recent European study at University Medical Center of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz also showed that age-related macular degeneration may not be a disease that only affects older people. The study found that of the 4,340 individuals who participated, almost 4% of those who were between the ages of 35 and 44 had some age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

'Its commonly been believed that AMD occurs in the over 50's, but this research confirms it starts much earlier. High quality optical lenses are now available that selectively filter out harmful blue-violet light and also reduce eye strain are now available and we routinely recommend these lenses for both adults and children to reduce eye strain and protect the eyes from UV and the blue-light hazard' said Mohammed.

Keeping Your Eyes Healthy

Mohammed recommends regular eye exams as an essential part of keeping your eyes healthy. Children should have an eye exam when they are around they are three to four years old and earlier if parents have any concerns. After that, children should attend an eye exam every one to two years, depending on the advice given by their optometrist. Eye tests are free for all children under 16 on the NHS. For older age groups in addition to regular eye tests, Mohammed recommends **Optomap Auto-Fluorescence** scans that can detect the early accumulation of retinal waste products (Lipofuscin) that can lead to AMD and **3D O.C.T eye scans** (Ocular Coherence Tomography) that enable us to *'see below the surface'* of the retina and detect the earliest microscopic macular changes. These scans are quick, painless and non-invasive and available in some hospitals and even a few optometry practices, such as ours that have invested in this technology. *'Early detection is vital as lifestyle, dietary changes, multivitamins (such as **Macushield**) and the right comfort enhancing and protective ophthalmic lenses (such as **Crizal Prevencia**) can all help lower your risk of the development of AMD'*.

For more information or to make an appointment please call Visual Answers Optometrists Quorn (01509) 414151 or Barrow (01509 416800)

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