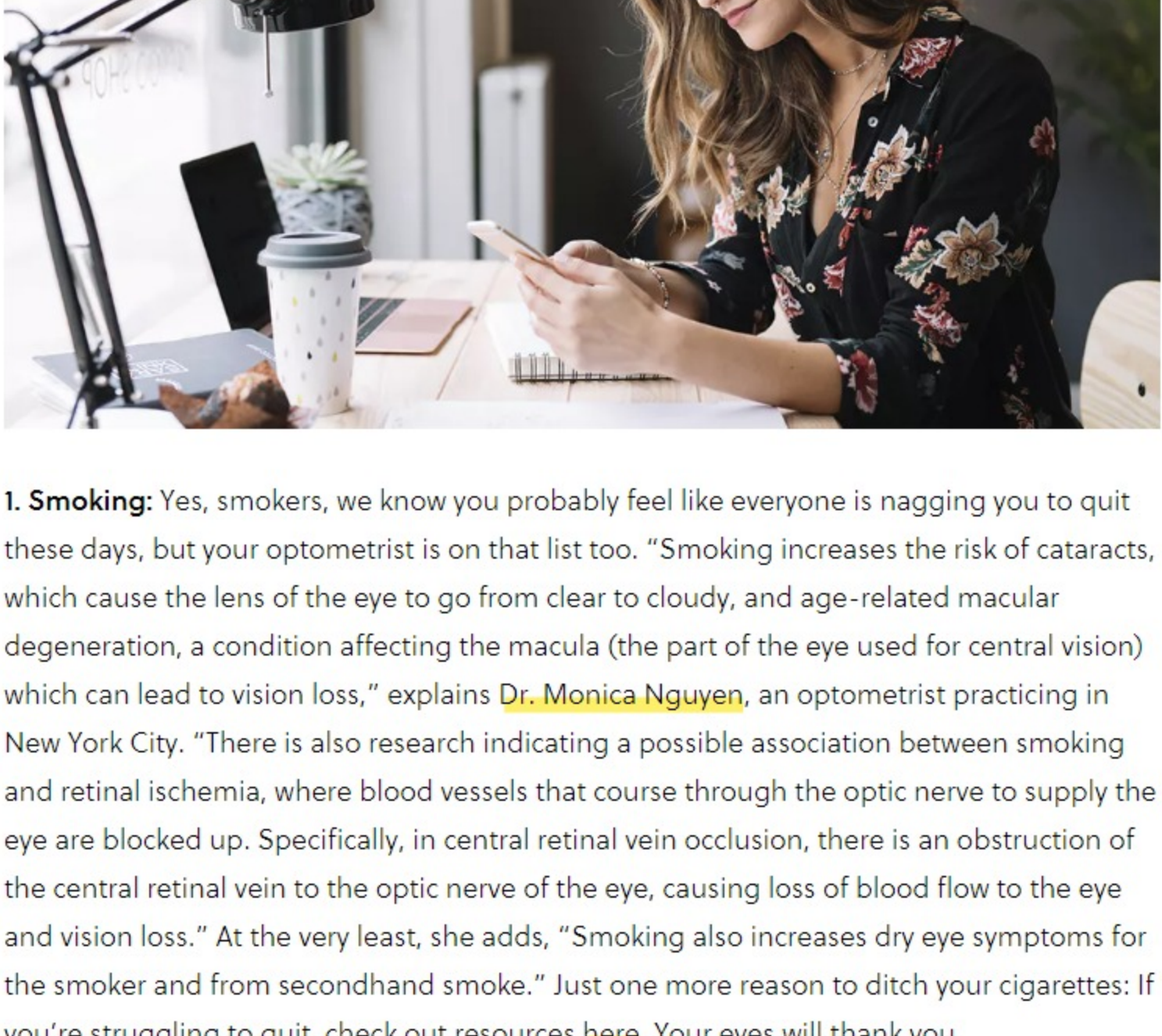


Lifestyle ▶ Health

# 5 Habits You Need to Break Right Now to Help Protect Your Eyesight

Natasha Lavender · Dec 27, 2018

If you're reading this article with your very own eyes, take a moment to appreciate the way they're transmitting these wise words from **your screen** to your brain. (And maybe also the **glasses** or contact lenses that are helping them out!) We don't often think about how much we **rely** on our vision, at least not until we find ourselves straining to see something that used to be in focus. Everyone's eyesight **naturally deteriorates** over time, but here are five habits that can speed up that process. Snap out of them now and keep your eyes in tip-top shape for as long as possible.



**1. Smoking:** Yes, smokers, we know you probably feel like everyone is nagging you to quit these days, but your optometrist is on that list too. "Smoking increases the risk of cataracts, which cause the lens of the eye to go from clear to cloudy, and age-related macular degeneration, a condition affecting the macula (the part of the eye used for central vision) which can lead to vision loss," explains **Dr. Monica Nguyen**, an optometrist practicing in New York City. "There is also research indicating a possible association between smoking and retinal ischemia, where blood vessels that course through the optic nerve to supply the eye are blocked up. Specifically, in central retinal vein occlusion, there is an obstruction of the central retinal vein to the optic nerve of the eye, causing loss of blood flow to the eye and vision loss." At the very least, she adds, "Smoking also increases dry eye symptoms for the smoker and from secondhand smoke." Just one more reason to ditch your cigarettes: If you're struggling to quit, check out resources **here**. Your eyes will thank you.

**2. Refusing to Wear Your Glasses:** Maybe you suffered through years of taunts at school, or maybe you just can't ever seem to remember where you left them. But wearers of glasses who want to protect their current eyesight should be committing to using them as needed to prevent eye strain. **Dr. Ming Wang**, an eye surgeon in Nashville, TN, urges, "Glasses with the correct prescription provide the most comfortable vision to reduce eye strain and over-focusing. Not wearing glasses can put eyes through unnecessary stress and lead to the development of headaches and eye fatigue." You might also have heard that wearing glasses makes your eyes weaker, or that not wearing them when you need them forces your eyes to get stronger. "This is not the case," Wang assures us. "Glasses are generally correcting for a mismatch between the curve on the front of the eye, the power of lens in the eye, and length of the eye. These physical parameters are relatively fixed after adolescence and are not significantly affected by wearing glasses or contact lens."

You don't necessarily have to wear your glasses all the time — just when you need them. Nguyen adds, "People who have a low, nearsighted prescription such as -2.00 may find they only need glasses for seeing things at a distance, but not for something close like looking at a computer, whereas people who are farsighted, such as +3.00, will find they need the glasses all the time for seeing things up close, because without them they have increased eye strain and blurry vision."

While we're talking about tools that help your eyesight, a bonus bad habit you're going to want to break is accidentally leaving your contact lenses in overnight. Nguyen recommends taking them out at least an hour before bed: "Sleeping in contact lenses is a problem because it causes oxygen deprivation to the front surface of the eye, the cornea," she advises. "It also causes corneal edema, or swelling of the cornea, and neovascularization, which is an increase in blood vessels that causes red eyes. These all can result in dryness, discomfort, redness, and blurry vision." Please remind your 2am self of this, for the sake of your 10am self.

**3. Neglecting Your Veggies:** Specifically, veggies containing vitamins that provide antioxidants. Wang explains, "Antioxidants may help to delay the formation of cataracts, macular degeneration, and other eye conditions. Leafy green vegetables such as kale, spinach, and arugula, and colorful fruits such as blueberries, raspberries, cherries, and cranberries are excellent sources of these vitamins." And while we're sending you to the grocery store, throw in some sources of omega-3, especially if you're prone to dry eyes. Dr. Jeff Anastasio and Dr. Shelly Anastasio, both optometrists at **Louisiana Family Eyecare**, confirm, "Omega-3 has a proven positive effect on dry eye. It's found in a variety of products including fish oil, krill oil, and flaxseed oil. For someone with dry eyes, we recommend 1,000 to 2,000 mg a day, depending upon the severity of the condition."

**4. Forgetting Your Sunglasses:** No matter the time of year, do yourself a favor and put on your UV-blocking shades before heading outside. Nguyen cautions, "Long-term exposure [to UV radiation] can cause growths on the front surface of the eyes called pterygiums; cataracts; macular degeneration; and damage to the retina. The sun can also cause cancerous growths on the eyelid and premature aging of skin structures surrounding the eye." That damage can happen in winter too: 80 percent of the sun's UV rays can pass through clouds, so you still need protection even on gray days. And if you're somewhere snowy, you're at risk of keratitis, AKA **snow blindness**, a temporary but painful condition caused by sunburn on your cornea. Much better to get into the habit of remembering your shades.

**5. Staring at a Screen With No Breaks:** If you've been staring at this screen for so long you can't remember when you last looked at something in 3D, it's time you took a break (right after you finish this article, of course). Dr. Justin Bazan, an optometrist and the health ambassador for **The Vision Council** (TVC), points to **research by TVC** which found that about 80 percent of American adults surveyed used digital devices for more than two hours a day, and 59 percent reported symptoms of eye strain caused by those devices. "After a couple of hours of looking at a digital device such as your computer or phone, your eyes become irritated and sore and feel fatigued, and vision blurs," Bazan warns.

It's not that screens specifically cause these symptoms, as the Anastasios explain: "The computer doesn't actually create the eye strain; It's looking at the same close object for such a long period of time." To solve this, they recommend short but regular breaks: "Every 20 minutes, take a 20- to 30-second break from the screen to look at something further than 20 feet away."

Another issue caused by regular screen usage is dry eye. "When focusing on your device for a long period of time, your blink rate is dramatically decreased," the Anastasios caution. "This can cause a significant case of dry eye due to decreased tear production and decreased oil secretion by the Meibomian glands." Fortunately, Nguyen reassures us, "Staring at a computer screen does not cause permanent damage to the eyes." Break the habit, and give your eyes a break.

**Do you have specs appeal? Show us your eyesight-saving shades @BritandCo.**

(Photo via Getty)

Natasha Lavender



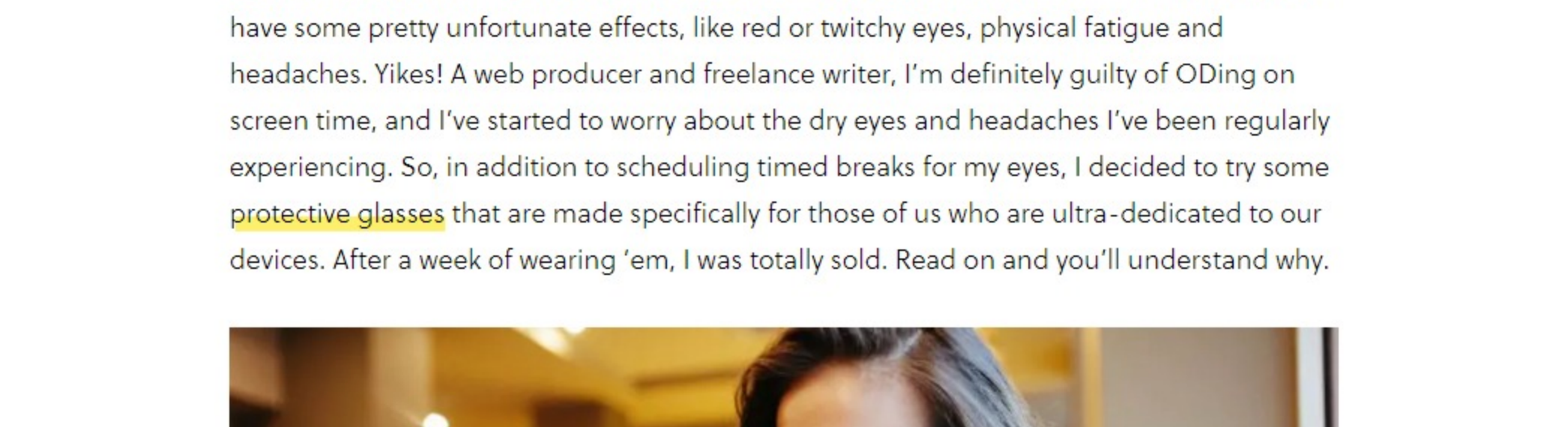
Natasha Lavender is a Londoner living in Chicago, and is fluent in British and American. She writes about pop culture, health, lifestyle, feminism, fashion, and interviews with interesting people, and has previously worked for *Good Housekeeping* magazine, BuzzFeed, and Hello Giggles. She loves podcasts, running, reading, dogs and cats equally, and peanut butter anything.

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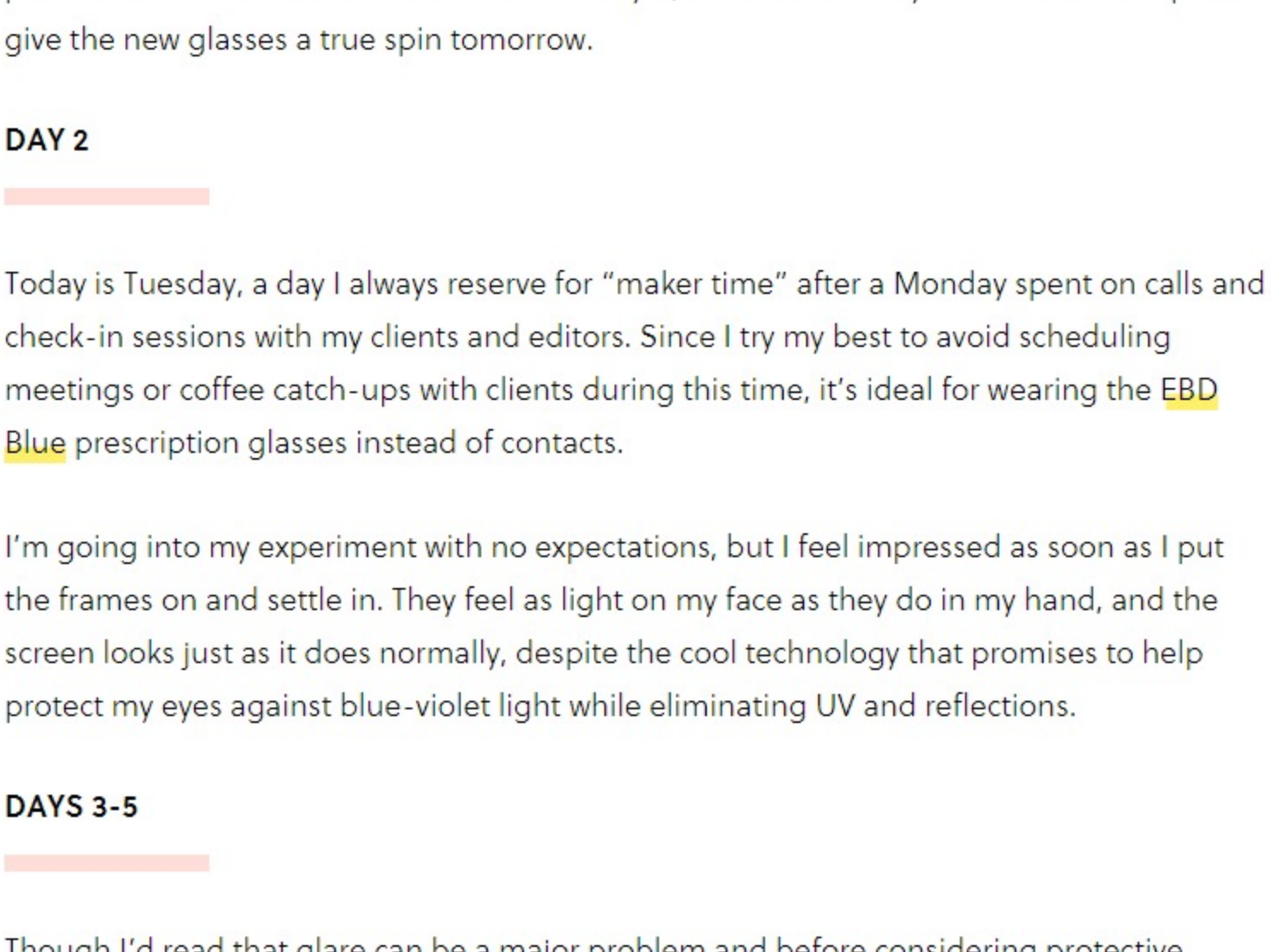


Lifestyle ▶ Health

# I Wore Digital Protection Lenses for a Week + Here's What Happened

Krista Gray · Dec 8, 2016

Whether you're a #girlboss **starting a subscription box company** or you're crushing the nine-to-five as a key part of your team at one of the **places everyone wants to work**, chances are you spend a good part of your day at the computer or looking at your phone. While tech can totally make our jobs (and lives) easier, staring at a backlit screen for too long can have some pretty unfortunate effects, like red or twitchy eyes, physical fatigue and headaches. Yikes! A web producer and freelance writer, I'm definitely guilty of ODing on screen time, and I've started to worry about the dry eyes and headaches I've been regularly experiencing. So, in addition to scheduling timed breaks for my eyes, I decided to try some **protective glasses** that are made specifically for those of us who are ultra-dedicated to our devices. After a week of wearing 'em, I was totally sold. Read on and you'll understand why.



## DAY 1

My frames arrived today, woohoo! I was fortunate to snag styles I loved both WITH my prescription and without, so I can wear them either instead of or with my contacts. This is pretty ideal, as no two days are ever alike for me.

At first glance, I'm super intrigued by my new glasses. I LOVE how on-trend they look, which is right in line with my normal glasses from Warby Parker. Right away, I notice the distinct purple tint that appears on the front of each lens. Since it's nighttime and I'm wearing my contacts when I open the box of new frames, I put on the non-prescription pair to spend an hour answering emails and then scroll through my social media feeds on my phone before bed. I don't "feel" a difference yet, but I'm definitely excited to wake up and give the new glasses a true spin tomorrow.

## DAY 2

Today is Tuesday, a day I always reserve for "maker time" after a Monday spent on calls and check-in sessions with my clients and editors. Since I try my best to avoid scheduling meetings or coffee catch-ups with clients during this time, it's ideal for wearing the **EBD Blue** prescription glasses instead of contacts.

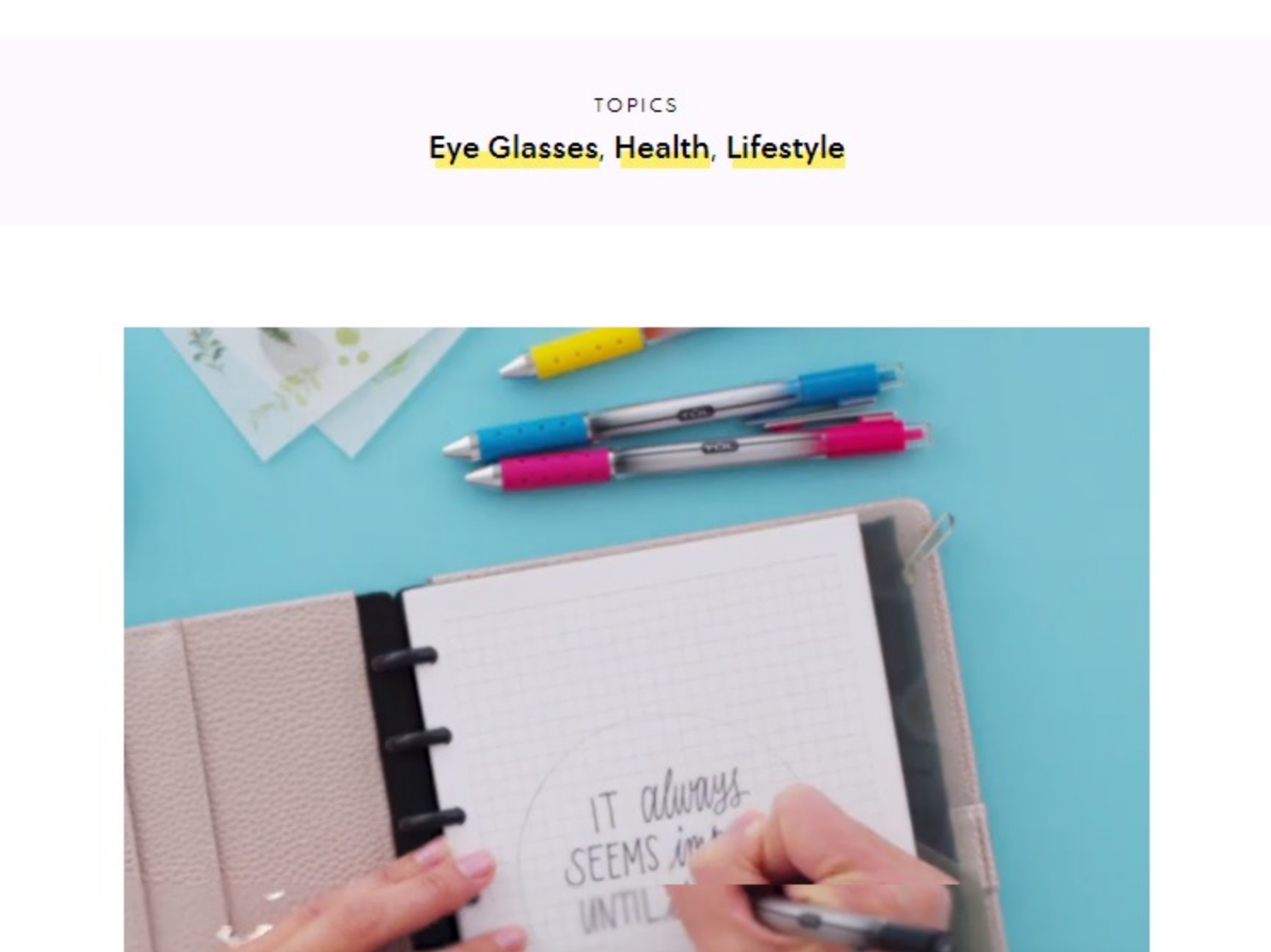
I'm going into my experiment with no expectations, but I feel impressed as soon as I put the frames on and settle in. They feel as light on my face as they do in my hand, and the screen looks just as it does normally, despite the cool technology that promises to help protect my eyes against blue-violet light while eliminating UV and reflections.

## DAYS 3-5

Though I'd read that glare can be a major problem and before considering protective glasses had already tried to reduce it by working where the walls are darker (rather than bright white), I still felt strain and fatigue after long days in front of my MacBook. It's not too surprising, though: According to optometrist **Gary Heiting** on All About Vision, there are a number of common culprits for computer eyestrain:

- **Brightness:** Your surroundings should be about the same brightness as your screen display. Overhead fluorescent lights should be avoided, and drapes or blinds should be used to reduce sunlight.
- **Text Size and Contrast:** Dr. Heiting advises, "Adjust the text size and contrast for comfort, especially when reading or composing long documents." He cites black type on a white background as the go-to combo.
- **Color Temperature:** I learned that short-wavelength **blue light** is visible light associated with more eyestrain than hues in longer wavelengths, such as orange or red — which digital protection works to fix by reducing the blue light from your color display.

Despite the fact that I hadn't suffered a headache during my first full day sporting the lenses, I decide to take the tips into consideration during my experiment too, hoping to reduce the symptoms from my screens even more.



## DAY 6

I've been wearing my prescription pair of glasses all week and haven't been feeling as terrible as I usually do, which is exciting. Because I usually wear contact lenses, it's hard to figure out whether it's ditching the contacts or the innovative technology that's actually helping me feel better.

With a couple of in-person meetings today and less computer time, it's the perfect opp to keep my contacts in and go back to the protection-only frames. I figure this will be an awesome way to truly know whether it's the special lenses that are helping my dry eyes and headaches or just taking a break from my contacts.

By 4pm, wearing the glasses whenever I'm staring at my computer or phone screen, even in my contact lenses I'm still feeling pretty awesome. Sold!

## DAY 7

Though it's the weekend, wearing the glasses has become a habit — so even when I sit down to tackle emails and scheduling, I put them on. By now, I definitely feel like I'm reaping the benefits of my totally cool and useful new glasses, and I couldn't be happier about it. These specs are the must-have I'll be recommending to friends, clients and collaborators for months to come.

**Will you try glasses for the time you spend in front of your screens? Let us know on Twitter @BritandCo!**

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(Photos via Getty)

Krista Gray



Krista Gray is a web producer and freelance writer who lives in San Francisco. When she's not working with clients through her company GoldSquare, she loves reading, traveling, and learning new things.

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