

6 things your eye doctor wishes you would stop doing

Lauren Schumacker Jul. 26, 2018, 5:01 PM



There are some things you might be doing that aren't too great for your eyes. [David Bruce Jr./Flickr](#)

Taking care of your eyes is important, but it's unfortunately pretty easy to let that fall by the wayside or not be quite as high on your list of priorities. And even if you think that you're doing everything that you should be, generally, there are still probably some things that you're doing that your eye doctor wishes that you wouldn't.

Here's what eye doctors wish people would stop doing so that they can protect their eyes from all kinds of daily stressors.

1. Stop staring at screens all day.



Take a break sometimes. HBO

Nowadays, it seems like everyone spends all day (and night) staring at screens. From laptops and desktop computers to tablets, TVs, e-readers, phones, and more, your eyes very rarely get a break. As it turns out (and you may already know), this can have some serious implications when it comes to your vision and the health of your eyes.

"Eye health as it relates to screens is something that is not necessarily at the forefront of our minds," [Dr. Preeya K. Gupta, MD](#), a board-certified ophthalmologist and corneal specialist at Duke University Eye Center, told INSIDER. "So if I had one wish, it would be to get people to screen more responsibly."

Gupta said that that doesn't mean that you need to give up all of your screens entirely (which would be pretty difficult for most people), but just that you need to think about ways in which you can help protect your eyes while keeping screens a part of your life.

Gupta advised that you look 20 feet away for 20 seconds after every 20 minutes you spend looking at a screen.

Additionally, make sure you take time to blink so that you avoid drying out your eyes.

"When we are staring at screens we don't blink as often, in fact, our blink rate can decrease by 50%," Gupta said. "The tear film is vital to protecting the surface of the eye from stress—when we don't blink we don't allow that protective tear film to coat the eye fully allowing the eye to become dry."

Keeping the light on your screen lower than other lights in the room can also help you keep your eyes healthier, she added.

2. Don't forget to schedule your regular eye exams.



It can be helpful for early detection of eye conditions. [LinkedIn](#)

If you don't think that you have anything that needs addressing with your eyes, you might not always prioritize regular eye exams, but you can still benefit from them.

"Eye exams can detect conditions that can lead to blindness, many of which are preventable if caught and treated early," [Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD](#), an ophthalmologist at Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center, told INSIDER. "Many conditions, if not caught and treated, can lead to irreversible vision loss. These include glaucoma, retinal tears, retinal tumors, uveitis, and others. The risk of not having an eye exam is too high. Also, the eyes should be dilated for these eye exams. Photography is an effective tool, but does not replace the need for dilation, which is currently the only method to fully detect all eye conditions."

3. Don't ignore the effects that smoking can have on your eyes.



Yes, even smoking hookah can impact your vision. Christopher Furlong / Getty

You might not realize that smoking — even smoking hookah — can have real effects on the health of your eyes. "Hookah smoking, like any type of smoking, causes both reduced amounts of oxygen to be absorbed in the bloodstream as well as constriction of blood vessels throughout the body," [Dr. Alan Mendelsohn, MD, FACS](#), a Miami-based ophthalmologist, told INSIDER.

"In patients with longstanding diabetes, the blood vessels in the eye are already damaged and are preventing blood from perfusing the retina. Smoking hookah only further reduces the amount of blood and oxygen that can get to the eye, hastening severe damage that can permanently impact a patient's quality of vision."

Though you likely knew that smoking can cause health problems, you might not have previously considered the impact that it can have on your eyes.

4. Don't misuse contact lenses.



Use them as directed. [Contact Lenses Ireland](#)

You might think it's fine to stretch the limits of your contacts, but your eye doctor wishes that you wouldn't. Make sure you're replacing them regularly and not wearing them overnight, Wang said. Cleaning and caring for them is also important.

"Patients should not stretch out their lenses past the time recommended, as the lenses start to develop deposits which can block oxygen transmission and allow harmful bacteria to grow on the lenses," Wang explained.

5. Don't forget your sunglasses.



Make sure they have UV protection. Rich Fury/Getty

Sunglasses are more than just a fashion accessory or a comfort, they serve a real purpose — protecting your eyes from ultraviolet light. "Unfortunately, many people, despite wearing sunglasses are essentially 'naked' outdoors," Mendelsohn said.

"High-end sunglasses do not necessarily afford a high level of protection. Even when we are driving or when it is cloudy outside, our eyes need to be protected. Loving your shades will prompt you to wear them more often. So spend the time to find the perfect pair and then read the fine print to make sure you will not only look good from the outside but feel protected on the inside."

6. Stop over-using drops to relieve red eyes.



You might desensitize your eyes to them. Will Russell/Getty

If you struggle with red, irritated eyes, you might regularly reach for drops meant to relieve those symptoms, but your eye doctor actually might wish that you did that a little bit less frequently. There are a couple of issues with over-using these kinds of drops.

"Most predominantly, with repeated use, the eye can become desensitized to their use and it can actually cause the eyes to become more red when they are not used," Wang said. "We term this 'rebound redness' and it can be looked at in a similar way to addictive properties of caffeine and nicotine. Repeated use of these drops can create a vicious cycle where the eyes continue to become more red and dependent on these drops to relieve the redness."

Not only that but what you might think is just innocent redness might actually be some sort of infection, which is going untreated. That's not good in the long-run either. You're better off making an appointment with your doctor if you have some unexplained redness to make sure that you're not making things worse instead of better.

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