Effects of blue light on kids’ vision

A screen may be a child’s distraction, but to young eyes it can be a disturbance. Children begin carrying digital devices from the moment their dimpled fingers can hold them — 72 percent of kids aged eight and younger had used tablets or smartphones by 2013, and more than one-third of them were under the age of 2.  

While the experience may make them tech-savvy and dexterous, the effects of blue light emanating from the screens of video games, cell phones, tablets, computers and televisions can affect kids’ vision and their overall health, research shows.

That does not mean children have to completely power down, though. Parents can manage digital exposure with a few changes of habit, and protection.

Why so blue?

Blue light, part of the light spectrum that is visible to the human eye, provides basic illumination and can also enhance feelings of well-being. This may explain why children are so easily drawn to the glow of their handheld devices.

But the effects of blue light on vision can be wide ranging and potentially damaging, depending on the length of a kid’s screen time. This is because their maturing eyes haven’t yet developed the protective pigments to help filter out some of the harmful blue light that comes from all that time in front of the screen.

Among the leading risks of blue light exposure is that it suppresses the release of melatonin, the hormone that tells us when it is time to sleep. An extended lack of deep sleep can in turn contribute to behavioral issues and weight gain due to overeating.
Effects of blue light on kids’ vision

Protect kids’ eyes

One of the easiest way to protect a child’s eyes from the effects of blue light is to call time out on their electronic devices. Put at least an hour between screen time and bedtime, some doctors suggest.4

In the interim, you could encourage the child to read a book. You also can dim the screens of all devices, which should limit the amount of blue light coming through.

Lastly, you can opt for eye protection. Yellow polycarbonate lenses or goggles are reported to offer defense from blue light in many cases.5 Similarly, ask your eye doctor if he or she could recommend a blue-filtering lens.

Standing between a child and his or her device won’t always be easy, but by developing some of these practices early the child will adjust. And who knows? Maybe he or she will be just as happy reading a book.

One hour
Amount of time doctors recommend between screen time and bedtime.4


Aetna is the brand name used for products and services provided by one or more of the Aetna group of subsidiary companies, including Aetna Life Insurance Company and its affiliates (Aetna). Policies and plans are insured and/or administered by Aetna Life Insurance Company (Aetna). Certain claims administration services are provided by First American Administrators, Inc. and certain network administration services are provided through EyeMed Vision Care (“EyeMed”), LLC.

Not all services are covered. See plan documents for a complete description of benefits, exclusions and limitations of coverage. Plan features and availability may vary by location and are subject to change.

Providers in the Aetna Vision network are contracted and credentialed through EyeMed Vision Care, LLC according to EyeMed’s requirements. EyeMed and Aetna are independent contractors and not agents of each other. Provider participation may change without notice. Refer to Aetna.com for more information about Aetna® plans.

Aetna.com
©2020 Aetna Inc.
10.36.330.1 (9/20)