



## Is Screentime Affecting Your Health?

Screentime refers to the amount of time spent using digital devices, such as computers, smartphones, tablets, and televisions—essentially anything with a screen. Many health benefits are associated with the use of digital devices. For example, telemedicine has made it possible to connect with a healthcare provider from your phone, tablet, or laptop. Likewise, wearable devices like smartwatches can help you monitor physical activity, heart rate, and sleep patterns.

However, with the average American adult interacting with screens for more than 7 hours per day, it is vital to understand how this constant exposure impacts health.<sup>1</sup> Excessive screen use can lead to:

- 1. Eye Strain and Discomfort:** Prolonged exposure to screens, particularly blue light, can cause digital eye strain, manifesting as dry eyes, blurred vision, eyelid twitching, and headaches.<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Sleep Disturbances:** Blue light emitted from screens interferes with the production of melatonin, which can disrupt sleep patterns.
- 3. Mental Health Concerns:** High screentime is linked to increased anxiety, depression, and diminished cognitive function.
- 4. Digital Dementia:** Prolonged screentime has been linked to digital dementia, which is associated with short-term memory loss and difficulty with word recall.<sup>3</sup>

To counteract the effects of increased screentime, incorporate these tips:

- **Regular Breaks:** Follow the 20-20-20 rule by looking away from your screen at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds every 20 minutes.
- **Physical Activity:** Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week. Activities such as walking, swimming, or yoga can reduce the time spent sitting in front of screens.
- **Offscreen Hobbies:** Reading a physical book, gardening, or practicing a craft can provide meaningful screen-free downtime and reduce eye strain.

By making small adjustments, you can significantly improve your eye health and reduce the adverse effects of excessive screentime. As you take charge of your screentime habits, you can protect your eyes, get better sleep, and prevent mental health decline.

1. Allconnect. "The average adult spends over seven hours online - here's how you can manage your screen time." February 23, 2024. Accessed September 28, 2024. <https://www.allconnect.com/blog/screen-time-stats>  
2. Healthline. "Blue Light from Your Phone May Be Permanently Damaging Your Eyes." September 2, 2018. Accessed September 29, 2024. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/phone-may-be-damaging-your-eyes>  
3. Healthline. "Can Excessive Screen Time Cause 'Digital Dementia'?" September 6, 2024. Accessed September 29, 2024. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/queen-guitarist-brian-may-stroke#The-bottom-line>