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Georgia Optometrists Say Eyes Offer Clues to How Holiday Stress & Year-End Deadlines Are Negatively Impacting Your Health ***How to Spot Early Warning Signs Your Eyes are Giving You***

ATLANTA, Ga. (December, 2023) – It's not your imagination, Georgia's eye doctors say. Holiday stress and year-end deadlines can affect your physical and emotional health. Now, Georgia's doctors of optometry are offering the warning signs your eyes may be giving you to alert you to potential problems.

"We're all trying to pack so many activities into the holiday season and meet those year-end deadlines that it can really impact your psychological, emotional and/or physical health," said Dr. Nacondus G. Gamble, president of the Georgia Optometric Association. "Fortunately, the eyes are the window to the soul and provide early warning signs that can help alert you to the need to slow things down a bit and take a deep breath."

Early Warning Signs Your Eyes May be Giving You:

- + **Eyestrain** is very common in today's visually demanding world, especially if your workday involves extensive reading and staring at a computer. Sore, dry or watery eyes, itching or burning sensations, sensitivity to light, headaches and difficulty focusing can develop.
- + **Headaches** accompanied by visual symptoms like flashing or sparkling lights and darkening of vision could indicate you're experiencing migraine with aura. However, it's critical to rule out other potential causes like damage inside your eye, a retinal tear or retinal detachment, which can only be determined through an in-person comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist. Headaches can be exacerbated by both stress and excessive screen time.
- + **Blurred vision** when looking quickly from near to far could be a sign of accommodative dysfunction, a condition frequently found in anyone who works up close for long periods of time, such as those who work on screens. Blurring and inability to focus can occur without proper lighting and posture, or if you're not taking enough breaks.
- + **Dry eye** is a medical condition in which someone doesn't create enough of a quality tear film to lubricate and nourish the eye. Tears are necessary for maintaining the health of the front surface of the eye and providing clear vision. Dry eye may be caused or worsened when reading or staring at a screen for long periods of time.
- + **Neck and shoulder pain** can result from tilting your head at odd angles because your glasses aren't designed for looking at a computer, or if you bend toward the screen to see more clearly. Poor lighting, a glare on your screen, improper viewing distances, poor seating posture or uncorrected vision problems could all contribute to neck and shoulder pain.

Better Work Habits

In addition to seeing your optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam, here are tips to help safeguard your eyes:

- + The **20/20/20** rule. It's important to rest your eyes while on your computer, gaming or using any device for long periods. For every 20 minutes on a digital device, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This gives your eyes a chance to refocus.
- + **Blink!** Blinking keeps the front surface of the eye moist, but it's common for people to blink less often when doing tasks on electronic devices. Blink rate can actually slow by up to 40%

when you're looking at a screen. To minimize the chances of developing dry eye, try to blink more frequently. Setting reminders on your devices can help you remember to do so.

+ **Digital device distance.** Your computer screen should be 15-20 degrees below eye level (about 4-5") as measured from the center of the screen, and 20 inches from your eyes. Smaller devices should be a minimum of 13 inches away to give the visual system a break, and make sure to use the zoom feature to increase small print and details instead of bringing the device closer to your eyes.

+ The right **eyeglasses** for the job. Whether your corrective lenses are worn for distance, reading or both, they may not provide the best vision for viewing computer screens. Tell your optometrist about your daily job tasks and hobbies. You may benefit from wearing glasses specifically made for computer work.

If you're experiencing these symptoms, visit a doctor of optometry for a comprehensive in-person eye exam. Optometrists can test for a wide variety of conditions to understand the causes of your discomfort. Only by examining your eyes in-office can an optometrist determine how to help relieve your symptoms.

"Unfortunately, eye health is not the first thing people think of when they're experiencing workplace discomfort, but a well-functioning visual system is crucial for everyday wellness," said American Optometric Association (AOA) President Dr. Ronald Benner. "Eye health impacts your overall health — and also provides important early indicators of numerous diseases. An annual comprehensive eye exam with a doctor of optometry is vital to ensure everyone's eye health, whether they wear glasses or not."

For additional information or to find a doctor of optometry near you visit the Georgia Optometric Association at www.GOAeyes.com.

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The Georgia Optometric Association is a statewide professional organization representing over 700 doctors of optometry located in communities throughout the state of Georgia. Founded in 1904, the GOA and its members work to provide the public with quality vision and eye care services. For more information visit www.GOAeyes.com, [www.Instagram.com/goaeyes](https://www.instagram.com/goaeyes), [www.Facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaOptometricAssociation) or [www.Twitter.com/GOA_eyes](https://www.twitter.com/GOA_eyes).