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NEWSLETTER**

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Can **blue light glasses** reduce eyestrain?

Blue light glasses are marketed as the brilliant solution to the eyestrain and sleep disruption caused by devices such as computers, TVs and smartphones. But do these glasses actually solve the problem?

To answer that question, we first need to figure out what the problem is. What is blue light, and what kind of issues does it really cause?

Blue light isn't new. The sun emits blue light, as do LED light bulbs. But in recent years, we've been exposed to more blue light than ever before.

Does blue light cause eyestrain?

The simple answer is: it might, but we're not sure. We don't have enough research about the long-term impacts of blue light

exposure over a lifetime, because LED devices are too new.

There's no doubt that staring at screens for too long can cause eye strain. But this might be due to the glare and contrast, and the way your eyes are constantly moving when looking at a screen.

What about sleep?

As the sun sets, the sky usually refracts more red and orange light. We have evolved to recognise this as time to wind down and get ready for sleep.

So when we flood our eyesight with blue light, especially just before bedtime, there's a risk it could confuse our natural sleep system.

So, do blue light glasses work?

Blue light blocking glasses have coatings that filter out the blue light.

There are a number of different types of lenses available, from lenses that claim to

block up to 50% of blue light, up to those that claim to block 100% of blue light.

"But," says CHOICE Australia, "blocking all blue light during the day could have other negative effects."

During the day, blue light can be a good thing. It's shown to help you feel more alert (which could explain the sleep issues) and also boosts your mood.

In summary?

Staring at a screen for too long can cause eye strain. The blue light itself is unlikely to cause eyestrain, but may disrupt your sleep to some extent.

To reduce the effects of blue light, you can wear blue light blocking glasses, but you're better off giving yourself more breaks from screens.

WHAT'S INSIDE

5 benefits of exercising in the cold	2
Where to find vitamin C – and why it matters	3
Is EQ still important these days?	4
What is OOS? And am I at risk?	6



International Men's Health Week runs from 13 to 19 June. This is an opportunity to highlight the importance of men's health and to promote and support the health and wellbeing of men and boys.

Visit www.internationalmensday.info/men_s_health_week_2023 to find out more



5 benefits of exercising in the cold

If cold water swimming, cold showers, or ice baths don't appeal, you can still get the benefits of the cold by exercising outside in the colder months.

Don't be put off by the cold weather. Getting outside to exercise brings additional benefits.

1. You won't get uncomfortably hot and sweaty. Summer may have its pluses, but the heat and humidity can derail the best exercise plans. "When you exercise in the cold, you can potentially push yourself harder and exercise longer or with more intensity without having to stop due to getting too hot or sweating too much," says Dr Cara Ocobock, an anthropologist at the University of Notre Dame in the US.

2. You'll burn more calories. Exercising in the cold will burn more calories but not because you're cold, says Dr Ocobock, as you tend to warm up when you're exercising. It's because it allows you to exercise longer without overheating. There's also evidence that exercising in cold weather helps to turn the white fat we use

for energy storage into brown fat, which stimulates our metabolism and helps to burn calories.

3. You'll feel more alert. Being in the cold can activate the fight or flight response, releasing hormones like adrenaline and increasing your sense of alertness, says Dr Paul Gallo of Colombia University. Fans of cold water swimming often report how their mood lifts after their plunge in icy water, but you can get the same effect after a brisk walk on a chilly morning.

4. It's good for keeping colds away. Exercise of any type at any time of year is good for your immunity, and in the winter months this is important for fighting off the common cold, COVID-19, and any other opportunistic infections.

Another reason to get out your walking boots and explore your city in winter is the wind. Wind disperses pollution and rain

washes the air of dirt and germs, says Annabel Streets, author of *52 Ways to Walk: The Surprising Science of Walking for Wellness and Joy, One Week at a Time*. She points to a 2021 study that found the best days to avoid catching COVID-19 were windy days, when germs and bacteria were instantly blown away.

5. Your heart will thank you. Your heart benefits from a cold weather workout thanks to something called vasoconstriction, says Dr Gallo. "This results in the heart having to work harder to pump blood to the muscles, especially if you're doing aerobic activity like cycling or running." Anything that strengthens your heart is a smart move, with cardiovascular disease being one of the top causes of death and disability. But always make sure to chat to your GP before starting an exercise program, particularly if you have cardiovascular disease.

Where to find vitamin C – and why it matters



Can a vitamin C supplement cure your cold?

Some people swear by vitamin C supplements, claiming they reduce the number of colds you get, or the severity of your cold.

There's little evidence for either, says dietitian Dr Tim Crowe in his podcast *Thinking Nutrition*.

"Most studies find no relationship between vitamin C and the occurrence of the common cold," he says. "Some studies do show a benefit, but only in a small, specific population undergoing severe physical stress like elite athletes."

A large review of studies that looked at the length of colds in people regularly taking vitamin C supplements found there was a reduction in the duration of symptoms. But the effect was very small – the equivalent to about half a day less in adults, and half to one day in children.

Skippping your daily fruit might seem to not matter much – until you realise just how important vitamin C is to your body.

In the 17th century, scurvy killed as many as two million sailors until citrus fruit was found to be a cure. The magic ingredient in the fruit? That wasn't identified until nearly 200 years later as vitamin C.

Vitamin C has so many vital roles in your body it's unsurprising that an extreme deficiency such as seen in scurvy can be life-threatening.

What does vitamin C do?

Here are some of its important jobs:

- **Antioxidant:** vitamin C helps protect your cells from oxidative stress, caused by things like cigarette smoke, stress, and pollution, and reduces your risk of diseases including heart disease and certain cancers. Its antioxidant role is one reason why vitamin C supports your immune system in fighting off invaders.
- **Forming collagen:** joint aches, easy bruising, slow wound healing and bleeding gums are signs of vitamin C deficiency. That's because vitamin C

helps form collagen, the fibrous structural protein in tendons, ligaments, skin, bones and blood vessels.

- **Iron absorption:** one early sign of vitamin C deficiency is fatigue which may be linked to its role in iron absorption. Vitamin C helps your body absorb non-haem iron, which is the type of iron found in plant foods.
- **Making neurotransmitters:** vitamin C helps convert certain amino acids to the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine, which are important for regulating your mood.

Where do you find vitamin C?

Getting a daily dose of vitamin C is one of the reasons we're urged to eat our fruit and vegetables. We're unlikely to become so deficient in vitamin C that we develop scurvy, but some studies have found that people who don't eat enough fruits and vegetables are low in the vitamin.

You'll need to get some vitamin C every day as your body doesn't store it for long. Where possible, eat fruit and vegetables raw as cooking reduces the amount of vitamin C.

Think beyond oranges. All citrus fruits are a decent source of vitamin C, but there are other fruits and vegetables that

are just as good and better (even when cooked), including kiwi fruit, strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes, potatoes, yellow and red capsicums, broccoli, kale, cabbage and Brussels sprouts.

Adults need around 45mg of vitamin C daily – you'll get this from half an orange, a small kiwi fruit, or half a cup of cooked Brussels sprouts.

Is EQ still important these days?

Emotional intelligence (emotional quotient or EQ) was all the rage in the early 2000s. Now, in this post-pandemic, hybrid-work world, is it still a thing? And has it changed?

Firstly, let's establish what emotional intelligence is, and is not.

Have you ever come across someone who's clearly smart and highly skilled, but just hasn't had the opportunities at work you'd expect? Chances are, they're low in emotional intelligence.

In a nutshell, EQ is about empathy and understanding, for yourself, and for others.

Or, as author of *Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace*, Mark Craemer, puts it, emotional intelligence refers to your skill at identifying and effectively responding to what you, and the people around you, are thinking and feeling.

"It's your EQ that enables you to be effective in your role, get promoted and do well in the workplace," says Craemer.

In practice, it's about how you deal with conflict and setbacks, how you encourage people when they're down and how you negotiate and get things done.

What's it's not

Putting relationships before to-do lists doesn't mean it's good to spend half the morning chatting. It means doing everything with feelings in mind.

Likewise, EQ doesn't mean using other's feelings and thoughts to achieve your own goals. That's manipulation, or at the extreme end, Machiavellianism.

Why is EQ so important?

Emotional intelligence is directly related to success at work – more so than IQ.

Before the term emotional intelligence was even coined, a 1985 study followed 450 boys for 40 years. They found that IQ had little relation to life success. The most significant predictors were being able to handle frustration, control emotions, and get along with other people. In other words, EQ.

A later 2003 study that followed 80 scientists over 40 years found that social and emotional abilities were four times more important than IQ in determining professional success and prestige.

See 'How much does EQ matter?' for more stats.

How has EQ changed over the years?

When the idea of emotional intelligence was first introduced in 1990 by psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer, the workplace was usually an emotion-free zone. It was generally considered unprofessional to show

or talk about feelings and private lives were expected to remain private.

As the Millennial generation entered the workforce, things began to shift. These employees had been brought up to be more open and honest about their feelings and their internal world. They didn't want to have to hide their authentic selves at work.

Now, with much of our work taking place online, EQ is more important than ever.

When working with dispersed and online colleagues, it takes emotional intelligence to maintain an engaged, motivated and inclusive team culture. A recent Deloitte survey on burnout found that 77 per cent of employees had experienced burnout in their current job. Many employees said they didn't feel supported.

Emotional intelligence allows you to understand and meet your colleague's needs – as well as your own needs – and bring out the best in the whole team.

Four pillars of EQ

Psychologist Daniel Goleman divides the necessary skillsets for a high EQ into four domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness and relationship management. In other words, empathy and understanding for yourself and others.

**Self-awareness**

Self-awareness is the ability to recognise your emotions, emotional triggers, strengths, weaknesses, motivations, values and goals and understand how these affect your thoughts and behaviour.

Self-management

Drawing on one's self-awareness, self-management is the ability to control your emotions rather than having them control you. It also includes being flexible, coping with change, and managing conflict.

Social awareness

Social awareness is the ability to accurately notice the emotions of others and "read" situations appropriately. It's about sensing what other people are thinking and feeling to be able to take their perspective using your capacity for empathy.

Relationship management

This domain pulls together the other three dimensions. It can be described as "friendliness with a purpose" and involves understanding others' reactions to a situation, and using that understanding to negotiate a good decision or achieve a goal.

How much does EQ matter?

- According to the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report*, emotional intelligence will be one of the top 10 job skills employers will look out for – now and in years to come.

The report says, "Overall, social skills – such as persuasion, emotional intelligence, and teaching others – will be in higher demand across industries than narrow technical skills, such as programming or equipment operation and control."

- TalentSmart tested emotional intelligence alongside 33 other workplace skills and found that EQ was the strongest predictor of performance.

"Of all the people we've studied at work, we've found that 90 per cent of top performers are also high in emotional intelligence," says TalentSmart. "On the flip side, just 20 per cent of bottom performers are high in emotional intelligence. You can be a top performer without emotional intelligence, but the chances are slim."

- In a survey conducted by Crunchbase for entrepreneurs in 2020, more than 95 per cent stated that EQ in leadership is more important than IQ.
- Emotional intelligence accounts for nearly 90 per cent of what moves people up the ladder when IQ and technical skills are similar, according to Daniel Goleman, writing in Harvard Business Review. (Dr Goleman is considered the global leader in EQ, and brought the notion to the mainstream with his 1995 book, *Emotional Intelligence*.)
- People with high EQ make more money than people with low EQ.

TalentSmart tested the EQ of over 42,000 people, and compared their scores to their annual incomes. They found that people with high EQs make an average of US\$29,000 per year more than people with low EQs. On average, every point increase in emotional intelligence adds US\$1,300 to an annual salary.

What is OOS? And **am I at risk?**

Once called repetitive strain injury (RSI) occupational overuse syndrome (OOS) is a type of injury common to fingers, hands, wrists and elbows but can also affect the tendons and muscles of the shoulders, back and neck.

Symptoms usually start gradually, sometimes with stiffness and weakness. Or you may feel a burning, aching or throbbing pain. Other common symptoms of OOS are numbness, muscle weakness, swelling or restricted mobility of the affected joint.

What causes OOS?

We used to associate OOS only with repetitive actions, particularly typing. Repetitive activities are one common cause of OOS but you can also develop it from working in a fixed or awkward posture for a long time. The following occupations may pose a risk.

- Office work – such as typing and clerical duties
- Process work – such as assembly line and packing
- Manual work – such as bricklaying and carpentry

You're also at risk if you play certain sports like golf or tennis (tennis elbow is an overuse injury) or use certain machinery such as hand-held power tools.

Reduce your risk

The way your workplace is designed can increase or decrease your risk of OOS. You're more at risk if the furniture or equipment is awkward to use – too high or too far away from your body for instance – or the workspace design means you have to bend, stretch or twist a lot.

Try the following to make things more comfortable:

- Use ergonomically designed furniture and equipment where possible
- Rearrange your workspace to keep everything within easy reach

- Keep benches at waist height so your shoulders can relax and your arms can bend gently at your elbow
- At the computer, adjust the height of your chair so your elbows are level with the keyboard
- Vary tasks so you're not performing the same action all day
- Take frequent breaks.

Speak to your manager if you are experiencing any symptoms of OOS. There may be ways to improve work practices and your workspace. If symptoms don't improve or they get worse, see your doctor.



Ask an expert about ...

Q. Can men benefit from yoga?

You can't blame men for thinking yoga is an activity more suited to females, says Exercise Right (part of Exercise & Sports Science Australia). After all, you see very few men in the marketing for yoga, until recently. But more men are beginning to realise the positive effect yoga can have on their bodies.

There are many styles of yoga, some intense and vigorous, others more relaxing and meditative. Most classes include a series of poses done either statically or dynamically.

According to Exercise Right, the physical and mental benefits of yoga are enormous. Men will particularly benefit from:

- increased flexibility (men tend to be less flexible than women)
- improved balance
- enhanced strength through range of motion
- injury prevention
- back pain relief
- improved breathing
- stress relief.

Still think yoga is for the ladies? It might interest you to know until recently, yoga as a practice has mainly been taught and studied by men.

Want to try a yoga class and aren't sure where to start?

Begin with an online class such as [Yoga with Adriene](#) (free). When you're ready to go to an in-person class, search for a free or trial session at a local studio, gym, fitness club or community centre.

21 June is The UN International Day of Yoga.

App of the month

Smiling Mind

Smiling Mind is an Australian mental wellbeing app. Developed by psychologists and with a focus on mindfulness and positive

psychology, the app aims to build mental fitness and resilience, support good sleep, reduce stress and improve relationships – for both adults and children. Meditations are also available in Indigenous Australian languages.

Available free from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Exercise important to manage depression

University of South Australia researchers are calling for exercise to be a mainstay approach for managing depression. Their study, published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, suggested that physical activity could play an important role for mild-to-moderate symptoms of common mental health conditions.

The review found that all types of physical activity were beneficial for improving symptoms of depression, anxiety and distress, including aerobic exercise, yoga, and resistance exercise. It's also something you can do if you're on a waiting list to receive further care.

Lead researcher, Dr Ben Singh, says physical activity must be prioritised to better manage the growing cases of mental health conditions.

"Physical activity is known to help improve mental health. Yet despite the evidence, it has not been widely adopted as a first-choice treatment," Dr Singh says.

"Our review shows that physical activity interventions can significantly reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in all clinical populations."

The study's authors note the need for further research to understand how exercise may interact with and potentially enhance other treatments for mental health conditions.

It's important to always seek professional help if you are struggling. If you or someone you know is in crisis, call Emergency Services. For further information and support, ask your doctor for guidance or visit befrienders.org.

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News Bites



How reducing sodium may save lives

A new study in the journal *Hypertension* has put a figure on the health impact of having less salt in Australia's packaged foods. Although the study looked at Australian foods in particular, it has implications for any locale that has a lot of processed foods available to the population.

The study estimates that reformulating packaged foods in Australia to contain less sodium (salt) might save about 1700 lives a year and prevent nearly 7000 diagnoses of heart disease, kidney disease and stomach cancer.

The global average salt intake is estimated to be 10.8 grams per day, more than double the WHO recommendation of less than 5 grams of salt per day. Most of it comes from processed and packaged foods including processed 'ready meals', processed meats such as ham, bacon and meat pies, salty snack foods, and cheese.

Reducing sodium in packaged foods through product reformulation programs is considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a "best buy" to prevent diseases related to high sodium intake.

Chat checkouts help loneliness

A major supermarket chain in the Netherlands introduced something called a Kletskaassa in more than a quarter of its stores, reports Dr Rangan Chatterjee in his *Friday Five* newsletter.

Kletskaassa translates as 'chat checkout' and it's an option for those customers who might like to stop and chat as they pay for their shopping.

"What an amazing idea!" says Dr Chatterjee. "As more and more people are removed from customer-facing jobs, and we increasingly rely on machines and e-commerce, the small interactions we have with strangers like shop assistants are dying out. And that's having a huge impact on loneliness and poor mental health – for both customers and workers."

The Netherlands chat checkouts were part of a One Against Loneliness initiative conceived to help the elderly but soon found to benefit many more.

1

THING YOU CAN DO TODAY

Make a booking to donate blood



Your action today could save someone's life. A new blood donor is needed every four minutes and just one blood donation can save up to three lives.

And it only takes 10 minutes – or about one hour out of your day, and your body restores your lost blood within one to two days.

When you donate blood, you may also have the option to donate your plasma or platelets as part of your blood donation. Donating your plasma or platelets can take a bit longer. Platelets are essential to stop fatal bleeding in people with leukaemia or those on chemotherapy treatment, or even people in surgery. Plasma can be used in 18 different ways from treating immune deficiencies to newborn babies, bone marrow transplants to burns.

To donate blood, plasma or platelets, search for blood donation centres in your area or ask your doctor. You may need to register, if you haven't donated before, and you may also need to check your eligibility, as some people might need to wait before they can donate.

World Blood Donor Day is 14 June.

EAT SMARTER

Pumpkin

Pumpkin is officially a fruit, as it contains seeds (which are also extremely good for you!). But most people eat it as a vegetable. It's power-packed with vitamins and minerals, and a very versatile addition to many meals.

As its orange colour indicates, it's particularly high in beta-carotene, which turns into vitamin A, and which in turn can strengthen your immune system and help fight infections. It's also surprisingly high in vitamin C, which can also help strengthen your immunity.

Plus, one cup of cooked pumpkin gives you more potassium than a banana, along with copper, manganese, zinc, iron, selenium and magnesium.

Simple baked pumpkin is delicious and can help calm your craving for chips, while giving you a nutritional boost at the same time.

- Preheat your oven to 200 degrees celsius (also works beautifully in an air fryer).
- Cut the pumpkin in half and scoop out the seeds. Save them to roast later.
- Cut into cubes or slices. You don't have to peel it.
- Place the cubes or slices in a baking dish and toss with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt. You can also add sugar and cinnamon, or even nutmeg, if you want a sweeter treat.
- Bake for around 15-18 minutes until soft.

