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4 Reasons to Take a Break From Your Computer Screen

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Introduction

Let's face it: many of us spend a lot of time in front of our computer screens - in some cases, probably too much time. It can be difficult to break away from the computer screen but there are a number of compelling reasons to carve out some screen-free time in your life every week. According to the Mayo Clinic, avoiding screens (television, computer, etc.) is an important health habit, particularly for children, as too much screen time has been linked to the following problems: obesity, irregular sleep, behavioral issues and impaired academic performance.[1]

In this edition of the Wellness News Network, we will take a closer look at how reducing your computer screen time can benefit your health. Your chiropractor can expand upon these health benefits to give you a more comprehensive picture of the merits of this important health habit.

Reason #1: It Can Save Your Spine & Joints

Reducing your screen time can have a hugely beneficial effect on your spine and joints. Sitting for prolonged periods in front of a computer screen can (in the absence of perfect posture) place a significant amount of strain on your spine and its supporting structures. The Spine Health website states that the leading contributor to neck pain is forward head and shoulder posture - a posture that computer users commonly adopt when working at a computer for hours on end.[2] Sitting in front of a computer can also place a tremendous amount of stress and strain on your mid and lower back joints and tissues and may lead to chronic back pain. Spending more time away from your computer screen can reduce the burden on your spine and improve the health of your spinal joints.

Reason #2: It Can Ease the Burden on Your Eyes

Staring at a computer screen for hours at a time places a large burden on your eyes and may lead to a problem called Computer Vision Syndrome, or CVS. According to the American Optometric Association, CVS may cause eyestrain, headaches, blurred vision, and dry eyes, and it is most

QUESTION:

What health problems can arise from too much screen time?

A) Poor vision
B) Spine and joint pain
C) Weight gain
D) All of the above

ANSWER:

D) all of the above

TRUE OR FALSE:

Excessive screen time can drain your energy levels

ANSWER:

True

Finish this sentence....

Too much screen time for children can lead to....

A) obesity
B) behavioral issues
C) irregular sleep
D) all of the above

ANSWER:

D) all of the above

commonly caused by poor lighting, computer screen glare, improper viewing distances, poor posture, uncorrected vision problems or any combination of these factors.[3] A review article published in 2005 in the journal *Survey of Ophthalmology* states that proper lighting, anti-glare filters, ergonomic positioning of your computer monitor, and frequent breaks from your computer screen may help boost your visual comfort, or ease the burden on your eyes.[4]

Reason #3: It Can Help You Keep Your Weight in Check

Limiting screen time can be an effective anti-obesity tool. Devoting some or all of the time to physical activity that you would have otherwise used to compute can have a profoundly beneficial effect on your weight. The Harvard School of Public Health notes that sedentary activities, including using computers, burn very few calories, replace more active pursuits and promote obesity by changing what and how people eat.[5] It is this unfavorable alteration in diet that may be most significant for weight gain, even more so than the reduction in physical activity, states the School.

Reason #4: It Can Help You Recharge Your Batteries

One of the most important (and least discussed) reasons to step away from your computer screen from time to time is the restorative effect this action can have on your energy levels and sense of well-being. It is easy to fall into a pattern of checking email dozens of times every day, communicating with your friends or contacts via Facebook and Twitter in near real-time and watching movies or playing games in your free time. But this may not be the most beneficial habit, both in terms of time management or its effects on your physical, mental and social health. Excessive screen time can be isolating, in some cases, drawing you away from activities or events where real human contact (not to mention natural light!) could enrich your life and improve your health.

Conclusion

Computers are an extremely important tool that have reshaped how we live and operate in the world. Computers allow us to enjoy many benefits that were previously unavailable in the pre-computer era and have become nearly indispensable to our way of life. However, like many things in life, moderation may be the key. Here is one simple exercise you may consider trying: pick one day every week and go screen-free for a full 24 hours. After a few weeks of doing this, you may notice a boost in your energy levels and quality of life. Ask your chiropractor for other ideas about how to step away from your computer screen for improved health and well-being.

Quote to Inspire

"Computers make it easier to do a lot of things, but most of the things they make it easier to do don't need to be done."

Andy Rooney

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