

Dr Arun Samprathi identifies a few of the routine hazards our eyes are exposed to and suggests ways to minimise the damage

COMPUTERS have revolutionised the outlook of the world, television has brought entertainment to our steps. All these are not luxuries now. They are vital parts of our lives, that demand our attention every waking moment. However, they have also produced certain negative changes that are affecting our health. Particularly, our eyes. Here are a few of them and ways to avoid them.

sure that may contribute to chronic eye disease. UV exposure can affect not only its surface, but also its internal structures (the lens and retina).

Those at risk include people who spend a lot of time in the sun, those who live at high altitudes and those who take photosensitising drugs such as tetracycline, doxycycline, allopurinol etc.

The ozone layer absorbs the shorter, more hazardous, UV wavelengths and hence prevents them from reaching the earth's surface. This short-

Blink before you stare

metres away. Those with poor sight may need to sit closer.

✓ Eye allergies

The eyes are one of the most sensitive and vulnerable organs in the body. Airborne allergens and other particles can land directly on the surface of the eye, causing irritation and redness. Although tears constantly wash the eyes, they can't always keep out allergens like pollen or pet dander. Because of this, allergies that flare up in the eyes, also known as ocular allergies, are common. Pollution is commonly associated

Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS)

Computers have become an integral part of our lives. As our dependence on computers continues to grow, an increasing number of people are seeking medical attention for eyestrain and irritation, along with back, neck, shoulder, and wrist soreness. A computer user must continually focus and refocus to keep the images sharp. This process results in repetitive stress of the eye muscles. Additionally, after prolonged computer use, the frequency of blinking is decreased and eyes dry out and become sore. As a result, the ability to focus diminishes and vision may blur, resulting in headaches.

Symptoms of CVS include:

- ◆ Eyestrain
- ◆ Sore eyes
- ◆ Periodic blurred near vision
- ◆ Occasional blurred distance vision
- ◆ Headaches
- ◆ Dry eyes, redness, burning
- ◆ Slowness in changing the focus of your eyes
- ◆ Glare sensitivity
- ◆ Watering

To prevent CVS:

- ◆ Use proper lighting avoiding glare on the monitor
- ◆ Keep the screen below the eye level
- ◆ Blink frequently
- ◆ Adjust contrast, brightness
- ◆ If you are above 40, use separate glasses for computer work
- ◆ Take adequate breaks every 20 minutes

✓ UV rays and eyes

Ultra violet (UV) light is the component of sunlight most responsible for eye damage. Excessive exposure, especially from light reflected from sand, reflective glasses, pavement, welding arcs etc, can produce a burn on the surface of the eye. Like sunburn on the skin, eye surface burns are usually painful, but temporary. Of

wavelength UV radiation can affect human health by causing skin cancer and affecting the immune system. It also contributes to various types of damage to the eyes (eg: macular degeneration, pingueculae, pterygia and cataract). The ozone layer is being damaged by various man-made chemicals (eg chloro-fluorocarbons, or CFCs), which find their way from the earth's surface up to the stratosphere and break down the ozone molecules

During cataract surgery, the natural lens is removed and replaced with a synthetic lens. Newer intraocular lens implants filter UV radiation. This eliminates any concern about UV eye protection after cataract surgery. To protect your eyes from the sunlight and UV damage, it is recommended that you wear a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses that filter out 99-100 per cent of the UV light.

✓ Television

Television is very harmful to the human senses, especially to young children who are still developing their bodies and minds. Staring at a two dimen-

sional screen greatly impedes visual depth perception and seriously damages observational skills in young children.

Television hinders the development of language, creativity, and reading skills in people. Television viewing is especially harmful to young minds developing these skills. Watching television is a passive experience. The viewer simply sits on the couch and stares at the screen. There is little thought and little physical movement (besides pressing the remote). This new age malady has made children sit at home, when they should have been playing outdoors. The other part is the content that is being watched and its ill effects on the child's mind.

Tips to minimise eye strain

While watching television, the lighting in the room should be appreciably dimmed — by about 50 per cent — than the illumination of the screen. Ensure that the lighting doesn't



reflect on the screen or cause a glare. Don't watch in darkness — the contrast in brightness is too sharp. Avoid viewing from an angle. Sit in front of the set at

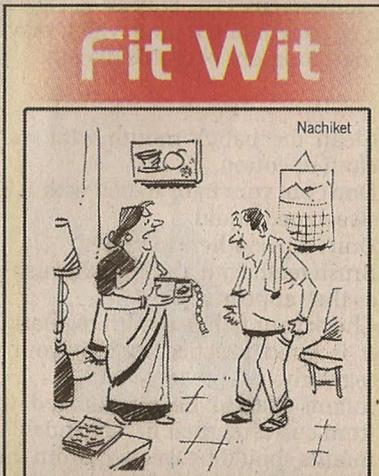
a reasonable distance of about four or five times the width of the TV screen. For example, for a 50-centimetre (20 inch) screen, sit about two to two and a half

with allergic conjunctivitis. While it comes in many forms, air pollution, such as the released from cars and factories, is commonly one of the more powerful types of contamination linked to all conjunctivitis.

While there are several allergy symptoms, some warning signs are more plentiful than others. The most common eye allergy symptoms include itching, stinging, burning of the eyes. Other common eye allergy symptoms include redness and tearing of the eyes. As noted, these are the most common indications experienced by those who suffer from the condition.

To prevent allergies, you should avoid going to crowded places and use protective eyewear. Treatment of allergic conjunctivitis is best done by an ophthalmologist. Care should be taken to avoid use of steroid eye drops.

These are some of the ill effects of urbanisation on our lives. We should attempt to minimise health hazards. ■



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