



# Blue light and screen time guide for employers

Strategies to help employees maintain or improve their eye health



Many employees are spending an unprecedented amount of time on digital devices each day. Screen time has increased dramatically for millions of Americans in recent years. Based on a recent analysis, the average person spends up to 13 hours per day in front of digital devices, up from between seven to 10 hours a day in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Some people are spending more time in front of digital devices than sleeping. Why is this development concerning? Excessive use of digital devices may cause symptoms of digital eye strain and contribute to short-term and long-term eye health issues.<sup>2</sup>

**Nearly 80%** of eye care professionals estimate that blue light is impacting not only patients' eyes but their overall physical and mental health.<sup>3</sup>

**Nearly 53%** of employers ranked blue-light-related solutions as the most important vision benefit enhancement.<sup>3</sup>

**Over 77%** of employers want a specific insurance or benefit plan covering impacts of screen time.<sup>3</sup>

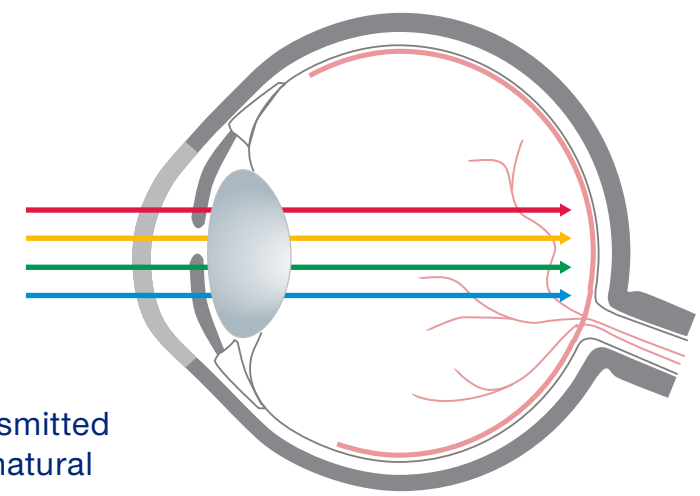
**81%** of employers believe blue light protection may improve workplace productivity.<sup>3</sup>

## What is blue light?

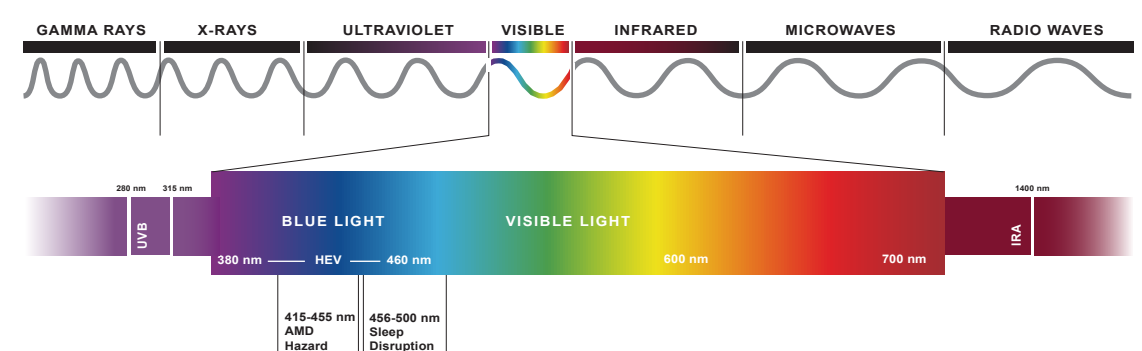
All digital devices, such as smartphones and computers, emit “blue light,” which is a low wavelength, high-energy light that has the potential to damage the eyes over the long term.<sup>2</sup>

Overexposure to digital devices and blue light may contribute to:

- Digital eye strain.
- Circadian rhythm disruption and melatonin suppression.
- Potential long-term retinal damage, age-related macular degeneration and other physiologic impacts.<sup>4</sup>



Visible light is transmitted to the retina from natural and artificial light sources, between the range of 400-700 nm.



## Digital eye strain

Currently, 4 in 5 adults report symptoms of digital eye strain, in part due to extended computer and smartphone usage and prolonged exposure to high-energy blue light.<sup>5</sup> Symptoms of digital eye strain may include dry, irritated eyes, trouble sleeping, blurred vision, reduced attention span and irritability and difficulty concentrating.

## Helping keep employees healthier and productive

In general, healthy vision may be supported by a holistic approach, including awareness, education and blue light mitigation solutions, together with comprehensive eye exams to help detect and enable clinical care interventions to help address vision problems. Some practical approaches to help encourage good eye health for employees\* are to:

1. Keep computer screens at least 30 inches away from eyes.
2. Look for warning signs of eye health issues, such as squinting while looking at screens, discomfort or dizziness.
3. Promote comprehensive eye exams.
4. Consider using digital devices with built-in blue light filtration or add screen filters to help reduce blue light.
5. Consider adding a “workplace benefits” option to the vision plan, helping provide coverage for blue-light-blocking eyewear.

# Product solutions that may help maintain eye health

Some new vision benefit programs<sup>\*\*</sup> may offer a variety of options for supporting a healthier work environment, including discounts for:

**Laptops and computer monitors:** Built-in technology reduces blue light at the source while maintaining color integrity.

**Screen protection:** A filter is applied to a device to reduce blue light without changing the screen color or brightness.

**Eyewear:** Eyewear with anti-reflective coating may help prevent potentially harmful reflective glare and reduce the risk of digital eye strain.<sup>\*\*\*</sup>



## Employers may consider products that meet industry standards for low blue light

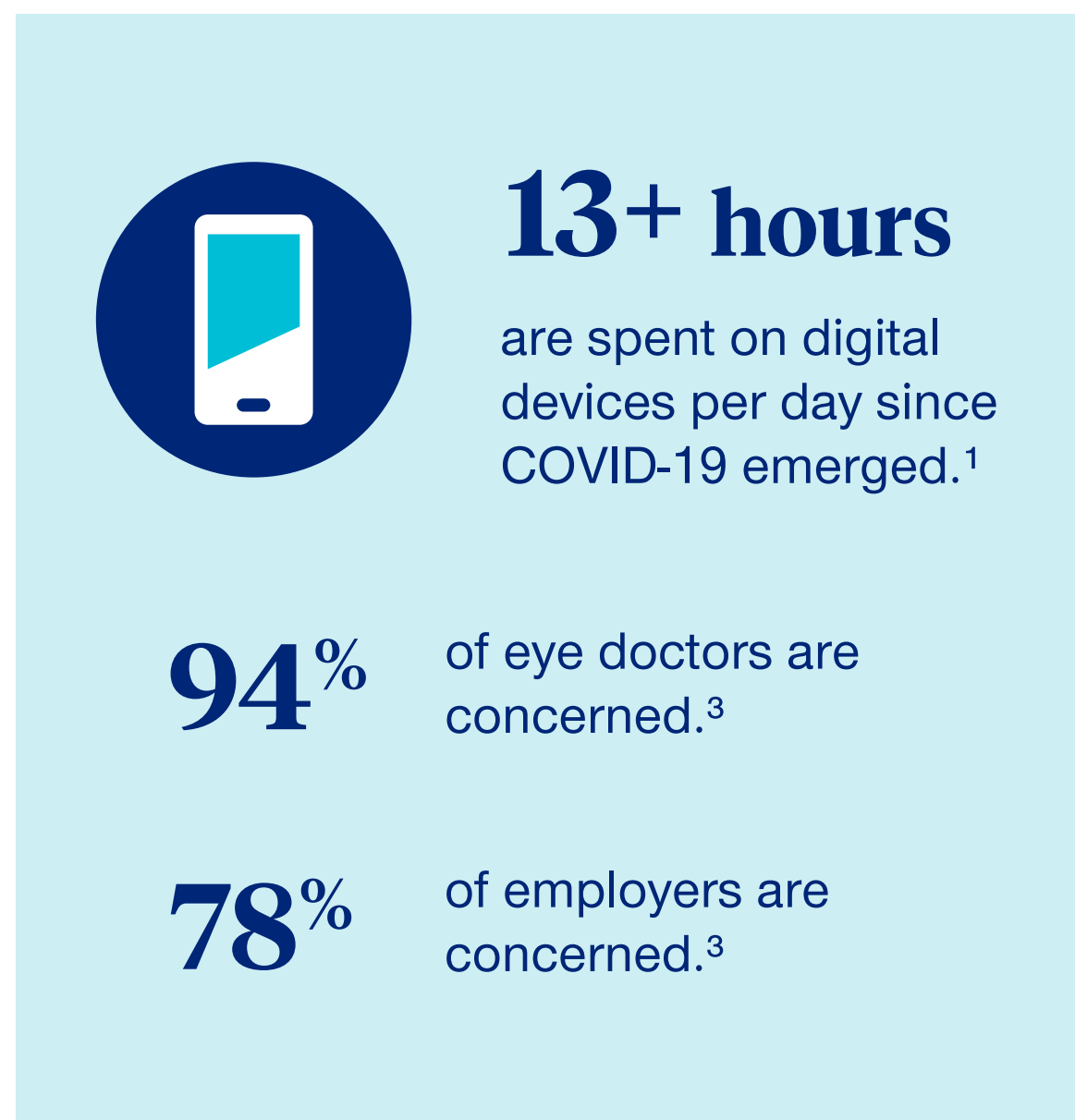
UnitedHealthcare Vision offers guidance on display types from leading brands that meet blue light emissions, toxicity and color performance requirements – all guided by the latest health research and input from leaders in health care.<sup>6</sup>



Find out what UnitedHealthcare Vision can do for your employees' eye health in connection to screen time at [eyesafe.com/uhc](https://eyesafe.com/uhc).

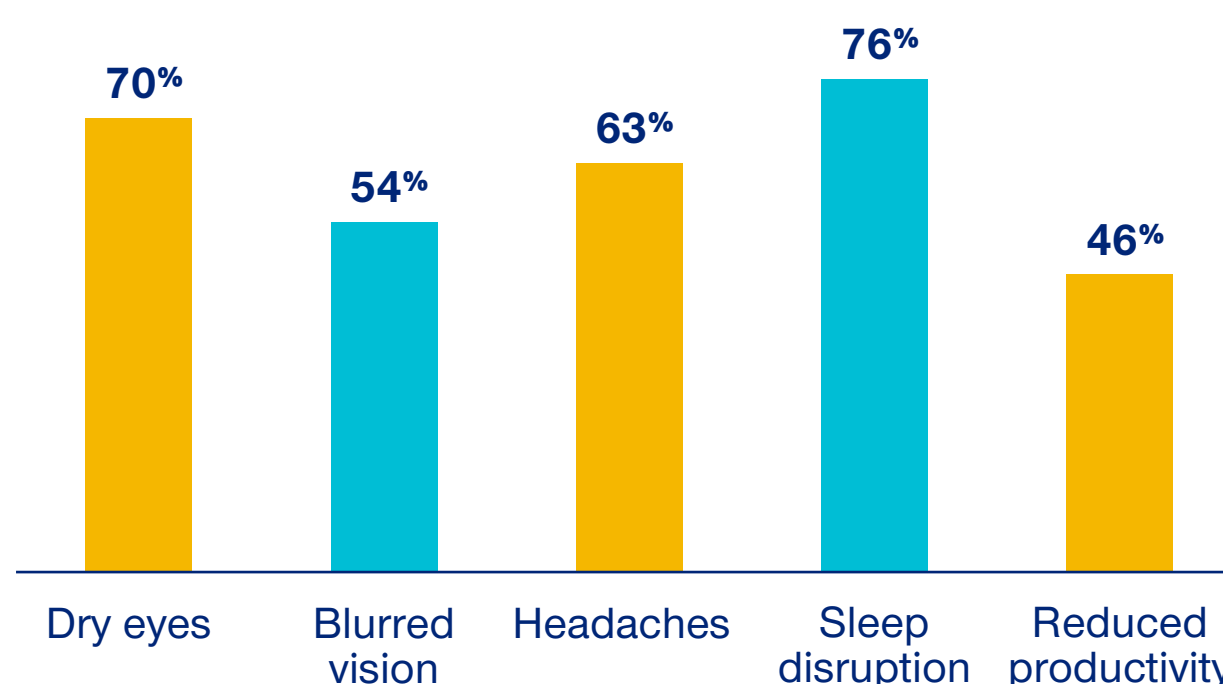
# Screen time statistics

As many people spend more time on digital devices due to the persistent spread of COVID-19, some eye care professionals and employers are becoming increasingly concerned about the potential health impacts of increased exposure to blue light. A recent report found:



Employers and eye care professionals identified phones and notebook/desktop computers as the light sources presenting the most potential health issues for employees and patients.<sup>3</sup>

Symptoms most cited by eye care professionals as a result of excessive blue light exposure from digital devices include:<sup>3</sup>



## Potential benefits of blue light filtering

Blue light filtering technology, either built-in to the display hardware or added as a filter to an existing device, may help reduce potentially harmful blue light. Potential benefits most often cited according to eye care providers include:<sup>3</sup>

**71%** expect sleep improvement.

**69%** anticipate improved eye and vision care.

**45%** predict increased morale and mood.

**56%** predict greater satisfaction with their overall care.

<sup>1</sup> Eyesafe, 2020, <https://eyesafe.com/covid-19-screen-time-spike-to-over-13-hours-per-day>

<sup>2</sup> International Journal of Ophthalmology, 2018, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6288536>

<sup>3</sup> Eyesafe Screen Time Report, 2020, <https://eyesafe.com/uhc>

<sup>4</sup> International Review of Ophthalmic Optics, 2016, <https://www.pointsdevue.com/article/blue-light-scientific-evidence-patient-care>

<sup>5</sup> BMJ Open Ophthalmology, 2018, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324556803>

<sup>6</sup> Eyesafe, 2021, <https://eyesafe.com/standards>

\* The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Talk with your health care provider about any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

\*\* Coverage may be available to eligible beneficiaries with qualified vision plans underwritten or administered by UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or its affiliates. Administrative services provided by MARCH® Vision Care Group, Inc. or their affiliates.

\*\*\* Pending availability.