- Vision disorders

Dry eye disease

Protecting our eyes in a digital world

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DRY eye disease is becoming an increasingly common eye problem, affecting people of all ages and lifestyles. With our growing dependence on smartphones, computers and other digital devices, many people are experiencing symptoms such as burning, redness, itching, a gritty sensation, light sensitivity and blurred vision.

Dry eye occurs when the eyes do not produce enough tears, or when the tears evaporate too quickly or do not provide adequate protection to the surface of the eye. Tears are essential for keeping our eyes comfortable, clear and healthy.

One of the major contributors to dry eye today is prolonged screen use. When we concentrate on a phone, computer or television screen, we tend to blink less frequently. Blinking helps spread tears evenly across the surface of the eye. Reduced blinking can therefore allow the eyes to become dry and irritated, particularly after long periods of screen time.

Age is another important factor. As we grow older, tear production can decrease. Women may also experience a higher risk of dry eye because hormonal changes, including those associated with menopause, can affect tear production.

Our environment can also play a role. Air conditioning, fans, heating, smoke, wind and dry conditions can increase tear evaporation. Contact lens wear and certain eye procedures may also contribute to dry eye symptoms. Some health and eye conditions (Thyroid disorder, Arthritis, Diabetes, Lagophthalmos) can increase the risk as well.

Fortunately, there are simple habits that can help protect our eyes. When using digital devices, remember to blink regularly and take frequent breaks. As optometrists, we often recommend the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something about 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

Getting adequate sleep, drinking enough water and avoiding cigarette smoke can also support healthy eyes.

For many people, dry eye may seem like a minor problem.

However, persistent or worsening symptoms should not be ignored. If eye discomfort continues, affects your work or daily activities, or is accompanied by signi cant redness or changes in vision, an eye-care professional should examine your eyes and recommend appropriate treatment.

As Fiji continues to adopt an increasingly digital lifestyle, taking a few simple steps each day can make a meaningful difference.

Healthy eyes are an important part of a healthy life, so let us make eye care a regular part of our everyday routine.