



# Six Potential Hazards of Too Much Screen Time

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Whether for work or pleasure, we are all spending much more time staring at screens than we did last year.

Clearly, there are many benefits of “Zoom meetings,” which is why we do them. But there are also potential hazards to be aware of. The first three hazards involve eyesight.

First, you really can become nearsighted by staring at a screen all day. This sounds like an urban legend, but “pseudomyopia” is definitely a thing. It is almost always temporary. Nonetheless, we wouldn’t count on its being temporary, given that it is our vision we’re talking about here.

This hazard is easily enough avoided, using the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look away from the screen for 20 seconds at an object 20 feet away. This prevents eyestrain.

Second is the question of blue light, which is given off in abundance by laptops and phones. While the impact of blue light during the day is far from settled science, blue light at night has been shown to interfere with sleep.

## Blue Light And Light Bulbs

The energy-efficient curlicue bulbs that we are all supposed to be using now give off much more blue light than the regular old Thomas Edison-style incandescent bulbs. You may want to use the old-fashioned kind in your bedroom.



iPhones and Androids offer blue light filters, called Night Shift and Night Light respectively. You can set your filter, via Settings, to go on automatically at a specific time of night, perhaps an hour or two before your customary bedtime.

Third, there is the risk of dry eye from Zoom meetings. We don't blink as often as we should during these meetings. Eye-moistening drops can address this problem. Make sure to use this kind, which come in a box, rather than a bottle.

These are called "single use vials," but just between us, one vial can last all day. There are many brands, with slight differences between them. For instance, some are thicker (marketed as "long-lasting"), but we find they impede your vision for the first half-hour or so.



Avoid the bottled drops for more than occasional use. They contain an ingredient that constricts blood vessels, which become visible when they expand to send more blood to your eyes. We doubt it's a good idea to second-guess a zillion years of evolution sending blood to nourish tired eyes.

### Non-vision hazards

Sitting in one place for a long period is simply not a good idea in general. In addition, most people stare at their screens using a somewhat unnatural posture. This posture causes a problem so common it even has a name: tech neck. The more you lean forward, the greater the strain on your neck.

Movement and attention to posture can avoid this, as can use of earbuds or headphones. As with everything else on this list, the hard part is not actually doing it. The hard part is remembering to do it. Fortunately, many downloadable apps can remind you to do the things above by beeping or send text messages.

Another hazard is mental: "Zoom fatigue." [As described in this National Geographic article:](#)

*During an in-person conversation, the brain focuses partly on the words being spoken, but it also derives additional meaning from dozens of non-verbal cues, such as whether someone is facing you or slightly turned away.*

Your brain actually has to work harder in remote meetings because, for the most part, you are focusing only on the words, not the non-verbal cues. Knowing this might encourage you to take pauses between meetings.

Finally, consider the drawbacks of meetings that allow only one person at a time to speak. Colleagues (or students) who dominate a discussion might dominate it even more, completely stressing those who struggle to be heard in the best of circumstances. Insistence on use of the virtual hand-raising and chatbox functions can ameliorate this, but really it is up to the meeting facilitator or teacher to guide the conversation away from this tendency.

The good news about all of these hazards is awareness is the major step towards avoiding them. This is true of many of the health issues addressed by Quizzify. If you haven't registered for [Quizzify](#) yet, now is your chance. Not just to learn factoids like these, but to earn \$100 in our monthly drawings.