



Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington®

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BACK TO SCHOOL VIRTUALLY? PARENTS SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO SUPPORT HEALTHY VISION

Washington, D.C. — As children, throughout DC, Maryland, and Virginia prepare to begin school, virtually, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington reminds parents to take simple steps to protect their children from the effects of too much screen time, including eye strain.

To combat eye strain, parents should implement the “**20/20/20 rule**”. Every 20 minutes, look about 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This will help reduce eye strain and allow the eyes to rest, which is needed as children focus on their device’s screen during distance learning. The “20/20/20 rule” is recommended by the [American Academy of Ophthalmology](#) and the [National Eye Institute](#).

In addition to following the “20/20/20 rule” to combat eye strain, the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington recommends parents to encourage:

- 30-120 minutes of outdoor time per day for children, to slow down the progression of myopia
- Reducing screen time for children outside of school hours

Long periods of screen time can cause individuals to blink less frequently, dry the cornea and cause irritation and discomfort. Also, too much concentration at near causes strain due to sustained accommodation and convergence making the eye muscles tired.

According to **Mohamad S. Jaafar, M.D., Chief Emeritus, Division of Ophthalmology, Children’s National Hospital**, “While there is no question that the benefits of distance learning are vast, extended use of digital technology can strain the eyes of children. We ask parents to limit recreational screen time when children are not in school and to encourage their children to spend time outdoors. We should motivate our children to explore the world by other means than passively through digital devices. Too much screen time hurts the brain, in the long run.”

“Parents must support and promote healthy vision habits in kids as schools continue with online learning,” says Caren Forsten, Executive Director of the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington. “Parents should encourage frequent breaks from screen viewing,” Forsten adds.

POB provides free eye health information regarding eye strain and other topics to parents, school nurses, educators, and school leaders. For more information, call the Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington at (202) 234-1010.

Founded in 1936, the [Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington](#) (POB) is dedicated to the improvement and preservation of sight and quality of life by providing services and education, and by championing healthy vision and innovation to everyone in our area.

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