

Blue Light Blocking Glasses: Trend or Useful Tool?

From phones to tablets – televisions to gaming systems, screen time has become a regular part of the day for people everywhere. In fact, a 2018 Nielsen report found that the average American spends 11 hours a day staring at screens.

That time online, however, has many people tossing and turning at night. The blue light emitted from these devices can be impeding the body's ability to release the hormone melatonin, our natural cue to prepare for sleep.

"Imagine if it's later in the day and you're on your screen – computer, phone, tablet, gaming device, and you're getting light emitted, then that light, which includes blue light is going to reduce melatonin, or keep it from coming on. And so after device use, your body might not have the natural timing biology for sleep," explained Dr. Sarah Zallek, medical director, OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute Sleep Center.

Sleep is more than just downtime for your body and brain to recharge. It is important to your overall health and well-being.

Some people are now relying on blue light blocking glasses to limit the effects of blue light from their screens. The glasses can be found anywhere without a prescription and seem like a simple solution to keeping the body balanced when it comes to melatonin production and sleep.

But do they work? There is limited research on whether the light blocking claims are valid, but Dr. Zallek says the glasses look promising.

"There are a few little studies that show some evidence that those blue blocking glasses may help," said Dr. Zallek. She continued, "And it's really a matter of trying it yourself and seeing. And it might be a placebo effect, but that doesn't really matter. If it feels like it's helping your sleep, it's probably not a bad thing to try."

If you think your devices could be keeping you awake at night, outside of trying blue light blocking technology, Dr. Zallek recommends pulling the plug two to three hours before bedtime, so sleep quality isn't a casualty of computer time.

"If you're on a device and you're having trouble sleeping and you can't back off from using the device then it might be worth considering changing the way you interact with the device," she said

As for the glasses, Dr. Zallek believes more research will be done, and that the specs are just the beginning of many blue light blocking solutions on the horizon.

She says, "There's probably a lot of blue blocking tech out there in device development that's in the works, because there's probably going to be something to it."

If you are having sleep issues that can't be solved by simply shutting down screen time, there are experts available to help at the OSF HealthCare Illinois Neurological Institute Sleep Center. For more information, click [here](#) or call (309) 761-4353.