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## **Warning for “square-eyed” Britons**

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**13 September, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Warning for "square-eyed" Britons**

**BNE:** A new study, conducted in the UK by The Eyecare Trust and the pharmaceutical company Optrex, has found that British people spend an incredible 128,780 hours stuck in front of a TV or computer screen during their lifetime. Eye health campaigners have warned this can be exceedingly detrimental to vision and general health. The situation is somewhat exacerbated by the fact that most people are unaware that their eyesight is being damaged by staring at TV screens or computer monitors. There are quite often no telltale warning signs, beyond the occasional eyestrain or headache, that something more serious might be happening. Even worse, says the study, is the fact that ten percent of adults have never had an eye test.

The study found that adult couch potatoes were glued to the TV for 30.5 hours a week, while workaholics spent 35 hours focusing on their computer monitors. Sixty-three percent of computer users complained about "terrible headaches" or migraines upon leaving work, while 53 percent suffered from tired or strained eyes. Thirty percent of those questioned in the study said they regularly put up with dry, irritated and watery eyes. Twenty percent confessed to having imperfections with their eyesight but not doing anything about it. Iain Anderson, chairman of the Eyecare Trust, said: "It's vital that computer users...follow a healthy eyecare regime. Screen fatigue - sore, itchy, irritated eyes or temporary blurring of your vision - affects up to 90 percent of VDU users."

## WARM-UPS

**1. EYESIGHT:** In pairs / groups, talk about eyes. Do you like your eyes? Do you wear glasses or contacts? Do you have any problems? Use these words to help your conversation:

- near / farsighted
- shape
- color
- eye care
- perfect vision
- eyesight
- eye test
- eye chart

**2. TV & COMPUTER SCREENS:** In pairs / groups, talk about how long you spend looking at TV or computer screens. Do you spend more time staring at them now than five or ten years ago? Do you get eyestrain? Do you know what to do to look after your eyes? Work out how many hours a day you spend in front of the TV or computer. Could you reduce this figure?

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*New studies / British people / TV screens / computer monitors / vision / headaches / eye tests / couch potatoes / workaholics / dry eyes / watery eyes / blurred vision*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. EYESIGHT:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "eyesight". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. EYE SPECIALIST:** Imagine you are eyecare specialists. Create a list of recommendations people should do every day to care for their eyes. Use the points below to help you.

- a. Television
- b. Computers
- c. Eye tests
- d. Eye wash
- e. Blinking
- f. Regular breaks
- g. Look at mountains
- h. Other

Change partners and ask your new partner if it is possible for them to follow these recommendations.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. The shape of British people's eyes is changing. T / F
- b. Britons spend 130,000 hours of their lives looking at TV or computers. T / F
- c. There are many telltale warning signs that eyesight is deteriorating. T / F
- d. Ten percent of British adults have never had an eye test. T / F
- e. Couch potatoes are glued to the TV for 30.5 hours a week. T / F
- f. Ninety percent of computer users suffer from headaches or migraines. T / F
- g. Twenty percent of people have bad eyesight but do nothing about it. T / F
- h. Screen fatigue affects 90 percent of computer users. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| a. conducted   | worsened            |
| b. exceedingly | visual display unit |
| c. detrimental | fixed               |
| d. exacerbated | carried out         |
| e. telltale    | regimen             |
| f. glued       | revealing           |
| g. put up with | damaging            |
| h. regime      | burnout             |
| i. fatigue     | very                |
| j. VDU         | endured             |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. an incredible 128,780 hours       | by the fact that...            |
| b. this can be exceedingly           | potatoes                       |
| c. ... somewhat exacerbated          | detrimental to vision          |
| d. There are quite often no telltale | of your vision                 |
| e. something more serious            | to the TV                      |
| f. couch                             | stuck in front of a TV         |
| g. glued                             | regime                         |
| h. regularly put up with             | warning signs                  |
| i. follow a healthy eyecare          | might be happening             |
| j. temporary blurring                | dry, irritated and watery eyes |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Warning for "square-eyed" Britons

**BNE:** A new study, \_\_\_\_\_ in the UK by The Eyecare Trust and the pharmaceutical company Optrex, has found that British people spend an \_\_\_\_\_ 128,780 hours stuck in front of a TV or computer screen \_\_\_\_\_ their lifetime. Eye health campaigners have warned this can be exceedingly \_\_\_\_\_ to vision and general health. The situation is somewhat exacerbated by the fact that most people are \_\_\_\_\_ that their eyesight is being damaged by staring at TV screens or computer monitors. There are quite often no \_\_\_\_\_ warning signs, beyond the \_\_\_\_\_ eyestrain or headache, that something more serious might be happening. Even \_\_\_\_\_, says the study, is the fact that ten percent of adults have never had an eye test.

The study found that adult \_\_\_\_\_ potatoes were \_\_\_\_\_ to the TV for 30.5 hours a week, while workaholics spent 35 hours focusing on their computer monitors. Sixty-three percent of computer users complained about "\_\_\_\_\_ headaches" or migraines upon leaving work, while 53 percent suffered from tired or \_\_\_\_\_ eyes. Thirty percent of those questioned in the study said they regularly put up with dry, irritated and \_\_\_\_\_ eyes. Twenty percent confessed to having imperfections with their eyesight but not doing anything about it. Iain Anderson, chairman of the Eyecare Trust, said: "It's \_\_\_\_\_ that computer users...follow a healthy eyecare \_\_\_\_\_. Screen \_\_\_\_\_ - sore, itchy, irritated eyes or temporary blurring of your vision - affects up to 90 percent of VDU users."

*unaware*  
*incredible*  
*worse*  
*during*  
*telltale*  
*conducted*  
*occasional*  
*detrimental*  
  
*vital*  
*regime*  
*glued*  
*watery*  
*couch*  
*strained*  
*fatigue*  
*terrible*

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'eye' and 'strain'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "EYES" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about eyes, TV and computers.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- conducted
- incredible
- detrimental
- unaware
- telltale
- eye test
- potatoes
- migraines
- put up with
- imperfections
- regime
- blurring

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you think of the number of hours Britons spend in front of TV or computer screens?
- d. Do you spend too long watching TV or looking at a computer?
- e. Would you change your lifestyle to spend less time in front of the TV or computer?
- f. How is your eyesight?
- g. Do you worry about your eyes becoming worse?
- h. How long can you spend in front of a computer before getting tired?
- i. Do you do anything to protect your eyes when using a computer?
- j. Are there any other adverse affects on health due to spending lots of time in front of a TV or computer screen?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Are you a couch potato?
- d. Are you a workaholic (or "studyaholic")?
- e. Do you suffer from headaches or migraines?
- f. Do you ever have dry, watery, sore, itchy or irritated eyes?
- g. How many times have you had your eyes checked ?
- h. What can you do to alleviate screen fatigue?
- i. Do you think people in your country spend too much time watching TV or staring at the TV?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## LANGUAGE

**EYES EYES EYES:** Match the groups of eye expressions and idioms with their meanings. Make questions and talk about the "eye" phrases

blink	You do this when the sun is in your eyes and you can't see or when you're trying to read very small writing.
wink	To do this you have to open and close one eye very quickly.
squint	You do this about fifteen times a second. It helps to wash the surface of your eyeball.

strain one's eyes	This means take a nap.
lower one's eyes	You do this when you pass people in the street and you don't want to look at them or you want to avoid eye contact.
rest one's eyes	This happens when your eyes become tired and painful because you've been staring at a computer screen too long.
roll one's eyes	This is when you quickly move your eyes in an arched shape to show someone you think they (or their ideas) are stupid.

(to) have a black eye	You need one of these if you lose your original eye in an accident.
(to) have an eagle eye	You may have one of these after someone punches you in the face.
(to) have a wandering eye	You have this if your eyesight is very sharp and you can see things very far away.
(to) have a glass eye	You have this if you already have a boy/girlfriend/husband/wife but you cannot stop looking at members of the opposite sex.



*Warning for "square-eyed" Britons – 13 September, 2005*

(to) be red-eyed	This often happens when you are drunk.
(to) be watery-eyed	This often happens when a man or woman you really like talks to you and you can't control your feelings.
(to) be glassy-eyed	This often happens when you are excited.
(to) be bright-eyed	This often happens if you're really tired, or after you've been crying.
(to) be doey-eyed	This happens just before you begin to cry and you're trying not to cry.

(to) see eye to eye with someone	a detective
an eye for an eye	You punch me and I'll punch you. You steal my car and I'll steal your car.
(to) turn a blind eye (to something)	To have the same opinion as someone else.
a private eye	To pretend not to see someone doing something bad and let them continue doing it.

(to) run one's eyes over something	To watch someone / something to make sure nothing bad happens to it / them.
(to) fix one's eyes on something / someone	To check something for mistakes.
(to) keep an eye out for something / someone	I'll let you know if I see the thing / person you're looking for.
(to) keep an eye on something / someone	To look at something / someone and don't stop looking.

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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The study found that adult \_\_\_\_\_ potatoes were \_\_\_\_\_ to the TV for 30.5 hours a week, while workaholics spent 35 hours focusing on their computer monitors. Sixty-three percent of computer users complained about "terrible headaches" or \_\_\_\_\_ upon leaving work, while 53 percent suffered from tired or \_\_\_\_\_ eyes. Thirty percent of those questioned in the study said they regularly \_\_\_\_\_ dry, irritated and watery eyes. Twenty percent confessed to having imperfections with their eyesight but not doing anything about it. Iain Anderson, chairman of the Eyecare Trust, said: "It's vital that computer users...follow a healthy eyecare \_\_\_\_\_. Screen \_\_\_\_\_ - sore, itchy, irritated eyes or temporary blurring of your vision - affects up to 90 percent of VDU users."

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on eyesight. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. EYECARE:** Make a poster explaining to people how to look after their eyes. Include a section on television and computers. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all include similar things?

**4. VIEWING RECORD:** Keep a record of how much television you watch and how much time you spend in front of the computer. Show your findings to your classmates in your next lesson. Who needs to cut down on time in front of a screen? Talk about whether or not this is possible.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. T      f. F      g. T      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| a. conducted   | carried out         |
| b. exceedingly | very                |
| c. detrimental | damaging            |
| d. exacerbated | worsened            |
| e. telltale    | revealing           |
| f. glued       | fixed               |
| g. put up with | endured             |
| h. regime      | regimen             |
| i. fatigue     | burnout             |
| j. VDU         | visual display unit |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                      |                                |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. an incredible 128,780 hours       | stuck in front of a TV         |
| b. this can be exceedingly           | detrimental to vision          |
| c. ... somewhat exacerbated          | by the fact that...            |
| d. There are quite often no telltale | warning signs                  |
| e. something more serious            | might be happening             |
| f. couch                             | potatoes                       |
| g. glued                             | to the TV                      |
| h. regularly put up with             | dry, irritated and watery eyes |
| i. follow a healthy eyecare          | regime                         |
| j. temporary blurring                | of your vision                 |

### GAP FILL:

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