Our last edition of **A Healthy Minute** summarized some of the challenges we face in our technology-centered world, so here's a follow up on <u>additional ways to reduce or avoid eye strain.</u>

During this coronavirus pandemic, many of us are now working from home. Aside from the obvious challenges and distractions of work and home life co-existing within the same 4 walls, few of us are blessed with formal office space that allows us to work that 9 to 5 time span comfortably and efficiently. So, we look for creative ways to turn available countertops, kitchen tables, bedrooms and dens into office space eutopia. (Let me know how *that* works for you!)

The following are considerations to keep in mind when setting up your makeshift office environment to make it as productive as possible and to preserve a high level of eye health.

Adjust your computer screen height: When setting up your digital devices, adjust the computer screen height so it's at eye level or so you look slightly downward at the screen. If you are working with a laptop, you may need to utilize a separate keyboard for more comfortable typing. If you have an adjustable office chair at home, you can accomplish the same thing by changing the height of your chair.

Avoid eye dryness: When choosing a location for your office space, be aware of air sources near your workspace that can dry out your eyes. If necessary, artificial tears from your local drugstore can help relieve eye dryness and soreness. A humidifier can also help.

Adjust screen brightness: As much as possible, use your computer in an area with adequate lighting. Adjust the brightness of your screen to match the brightness of light in the surrounding room, dimming the screen if necessary.

Social distancing: Sit farther away from your computer screen. A good rule is to sit about an arm's length, or 20-25 inches, away. Many of us work with our laptops closer to our eyes than is advisable. After all, the very name of the device (laptop) implies this to be the expected working location of that device. But close screen work also contributes to eye strain.

Cut down on glare: Computer screen glare is often an issue. Using a matte screen filter can reduce or eliminate this annoyance and ease eye strain.

Keep your screens clean: Dirty screens with fingerprints and smudges can strain your eyes even more.

Give your eyes a rest: Do your best to remember to follow the 20-20-20 rule. Set a timer to remind you to look away every 20 minutes at an object that is about 20 feet away for a full 20 seconds. Blink often to help replenish your eye's own tears whether you're using a digital device, for business or pleasure. (See the previous article for more info on this topic.)

Contacts vs. Glasses: If you wear contact lenses, you may experience a greater degree of eye dryness and irritation. Try giving your eyes a break from time to time by wearing glasses.

Wash Your Hands! Avoid sleeping in contact lenses, even those that are marketed as "extended wear." Also always wash your hands and follow other good hygiene when putting in or taking out your lenses.

Give yourself a mini-massage: Massaging the muscle around the eyes can help combat fatigue and strain.

Lastly, don't forget to MOVE! Our bodies were created to move more than we sit. Sitting for long periods of time has its own laundry list of negative impacts on our health. In addition, your brain works better when your body is active. So, remember to take a technology break at least every hour by getting up and moving around. Use the time for a quick stretch and hydration break. When it comes time for a meal, avoid the temptation to eat at your desk, or worse yet, work through that lunch hour. That 30-45 minute break will actually help you be more productive when you return to work. Your body, your brain, and your eyes, will thank you for it!