Amber-Tinted Glasses May Relieve Insomnia

Amber lenses can block exposure to the blue light from electronic devices, which aggravates sleeplessness.

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Gadgets used throughout the day, such as smartphones and laptops, are powered in part by LEDs that emit a type of light that can interfere with the body's ability to prepare for slumber. But recent findings, soon to be published in the Journal of Psychiatric Research, show that for those suffering from insomnia, wearing shades with amber-tinted lenses might alleviate some of the adverse effects caused by exposure to excessive amounts of this bright blue light during the evening, reports EurekAlert.

For the study, researchers from Columbia University Medical Center enrolled 14 individuals diagnosed with insomnia and assigned them to wear either glasses with amber-colored lenses that blocked blue light or glasses with clear placebo lenses for two hours before bedtime for seven consecutive nights. Four weeks later, participants repeated the experiment with the other set of glasses.

Results showed that members of the study group who wore blue-light-blocking specs slept for an extra 30 minutes and noted better quality and soundness of sleep with a reduced severity of sleeplessness than those who wore glasses with clear lenses.

"Now more than ever we are exposing ourselves to high amounts of blue light before bedtime, which may contribute to or exacerbate sleep problems," said Ari Shechter, PhD, an assistant professor of medical sciences at the university and the leader of the research team. "Amber lenses are affordable, and they can easily be combined with other established cognitive and behavioral techniques for insomnia management."

To sleep better at night, Shechter suggested that people select the amber light setting on their smartphones and decrease the brightness of their phone's display. In addition, he advised that individuals try amber-lensed glasses to filter out the blue light emanating from other sources found in the home, such as televisions, computers and energy-efficient light bulbs.

Interestingly, scientists also noted a dip in blood pressure among folks when they wore the tinted glasses. Shechter said researchers plan to investigate this effect further to determine whether

blocking blue light can help improve cardiovascular outcomes for those who suffer from poor sleep.

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