

Apparently, Using Your Phone in Bed Can Cause ‘Transient Smartphone Blindness’

By Paige Towers • June 23, 2016 at 2:13pm

SHARE ON FACEBOOK TWEET TUMBLR EMAIL

Okay, most of us know why we shouldn't have our smartphones in bed: the blue light

emitted from screens suppresses melatonin, the vibrations of a late night text or email can nudge us awake or we simply can't resist the temptation to stay up swiping through 'cat fail' videos. But here's a new risk associated with looking at your smartphone while under the sheets: temporary blindness.

An article published in the

New England Journal of Medicine

this week detailed the bizarre cases of two unrelated women in England who kept going temporarily blind in one eye either at night or in the morning. After initially stumping doctors who tested for and ruled out conditions like stroke or a compressed optic nerve, the eye specialists who treated the women came up with another probable culprit: gazing at their phones while lying in bed with one eye open, and one eye covered (by a pillow, for instance), led to their vision loss.

<http://vanwinkles.com/usingasmartphoneinbedleadstoeyetrouble> 1/3

Gazing at their phones while lying in bed with one eye open, and one eye covered (by a pillow, for instance), led to their vision loss.

“Transient smartphone ‘blindness’” — which is the fancy new term for going blind in one eye for a period of several minutes or even longer — arises when one eye is adapted to the dark and the other is adapted to the light. This reaction may occur because the lightadapted eye was perceived to be “blind” after both eyes were uncovered in the dark, as Omar Mahroo

— the ophthalmologist in London who authored the article — noted.

As reported by NPR,

Mahroo tested this theory about the women’s disrupted vision by doing a little selfexperimenting. He revvedup a device that uses electrodes to measure the current flow in the photoreceptors of eye retinas, and — after connecting himself to the setup and recreating the scenario — found similar results. The retina gazing at the screen took significantly longer to adjust than the one that was covered.

11/10/2016 Looking at Smartphones in Bed Led to Temporary Blindness in Two Women | Van Winkle's

<http://vanwinkles.com/usingasmartphoneinbedleadstoeyetrouble> 3/3

m01229 Creative Commons

According to Mahroo, he and his colleagues have had multiple other bedtime smartphone users report similar vision loss. So, it's possible that this is becoming an actual issue, despite the study only focusing on two patients. But are there any long term worries? As Mahroo "We don't know of any ill effects."

states, Phew.

That said, reading in a dark room with one eye covered seems a bit odd to begin with, right? Perhaps the act of one eyeoogling a smartphone screen in bed should just be added to the "List of Things to Avoid," along with sleeping less than 7 hours a day, overdoing it on caffeine and wearing fedoras.

SHARE ON FACEBOOK TWEET TUMBLR EMAIL