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Healthy Lighting



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Healthy lighting gives people the full spectrum light that nature produces. According to Columbia University, studies on Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) started by using full spectrum bulbs. Light bulbs that mimic sunlight alleviate the winter blues by providing the right light to people sensitive to lack of sunlight. The wrong light, such as glare on computer monitors, causes preventable problems such as headaches and eyestrain. Choose sunlight and healthy light products for your home.

Lighting Needs

Assess your lighting. Turn on overhead lights and lamps after dark and sit in the areas of each room where the lighting is used. Test the lighting with your usual activities. For example: reading a magazine on the sofa, reading a book in bed, working on a laptop in the breakfast nook, playing a game in the family room. Notice glare on pages or the computer screen. Notice whether illumination is sufficient for comfortable reading in all the areas where you read. Make a room by room list of all the light fixtures, both overhead and lamps, and the correct wattage for each. For areas with too much glare, reduce the wattage. For example: living room: six 75-watt bulbs, four 100-watt bulbs, 2 60-watt bulbs; master bath: eight 45-watt globe bulbs, three 60-watt bulbs. For convenience create a master list of all bulbs required to use each time you buy light bulbs. Increase natural sunlight exposure by keeping windows and shades open as much as possible. Sheers (translucent curtains that allow in light while providing some privacy) make a good choice in rooms that are visible from outside the home. Consider installing skylights to increase natural light, if the budget allows.

Task Lighting

Choose adjustable lighting for task areas such as home office, desks, and workshop. Use a dimmer lamp with a full spectrum bulb to control the level of illumination for reading and paperwork and to prevent glare on computer screens. Use adjustable window blinds in reading and work areas, including the kitchen, to prevent unnecessary glare.

Add Full-Spectrum Bulbs and Dimmers

Bring the list and shop for full-spectrum light bulbs that mimic sunlight. Check for the term "full-spectrum." The term natural doesn't mean the same thing. Get enough light bulbs to replace the bulbs in all the living areas of the home and some extras to have on hand for when they need to be replaced. Consider adding dimmer switches and dimmer lamps throughout the home to control light levels.

References

- Columbia University: Q&A On Bright Light Therapy
- State University of New York at Buffalo: Full-Spectrum Lighting
- UC Davis: California Lighting Technology Center: Berkeley Lamp II

Resources

- FullSpectrumSolutions.com: Natural Lighting
- ToolsforWellness.com: Lighting
- Verilux.com: Light Therapy

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