

# Brain damage, face scabies, spying, eye disease, vomit from Facebook and Sony VR Goggles

## Sony's new PlayStation VR headset 'could lead to EYE DISEASE and VOMITING epidemic', doctor warns

Virtual reality headsets like the PSVR could cause long-term eye damage, specialists claim

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The [PlayStation VR](#) is due to hit UK stores on October 13, with a headset costing just £350 and allowing gamers to immerse themselves in a stunning 3D world like never before.

With more than 40 million PS4s sold globally, many experts are tipping PSVR to finally make virtual reality truly mainstream.

Tech giant Sony is certainly adding to the buzz by touring the hardware across Britain throughout September and October.

But while video enthusiasts are clamouring to get their hands on the devices, experts have warned about the dangers when it comes to long-term eye damage. And they could also lead to copious amounts of puke.

Leading laser eye surgeon Dr David Allamby, clinical director of London's Focus clinic, says VR could be setting up a generation of young adults for myopia and agonisingly-painful "dry eye".



Laser eye surgeon Dr David Allamby from London's Focus clinic

"With virtual reality headsets about to experience a real boom, we are setting up the next generation of gamers for some potentially serious eye problems," he explains.

"Parents and younger people need to know the risks.

"With VR, we're going to potentially see more and more people suffering from a lack of exposure to daylight - something which affects the way our eyes naturally grow and which can lead to short-sightedness, or 'myopia'.

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"And because VR prevents our eyes from naturally focusing at a far distance, this too can speed-up the progression of myopia."

Dr Allamby added that there are other optical issues that are specific to using VR headsets.



(Photo: Sony)

"Many VR users have complained about dry eye or eye strain from wearing headsets, a condition exacerbated by the fact that some wearers, when in a stressful situation and immersed in a 3D action environment, simply neglect to blink as often as they should be to really lubricate the eye," he said.

"And it's not something to be taken lightly.

"Over a prolonged period of time, dry eye can lead to extreme pain, with sufferers sometimes describing it as being stabbed in their eyes."

Other experts have warned about how VR disrupts how our eyes naturally converge and diverge as we focus on objects at different distances - something known as "vergence-accommodation coupling".



VR can cause eye strain (Photo: Getty)

Dr Allamby adds: "VR headsets contain two small digital screens, each projected at one eye, creating a stereoscopic effect to create an illusion of depth.

"The closeness of these to the eyes over intense long periods of use could lead to severe vision strain or neurological issues and needs to be better understood."

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Recent research from the University of California Los Angeles found that, when tested on rats, a virtual experience caused 60% of the brain cells in the Hippocampus region to "shut down".

That's the part of the brain which maps an individual's location in space, along with supporting other functions like memory, learning and dreaming.

It's not just your eyes which could suffer after a VR session - so could your stomach.



(Photo: Sony)

Earlier this year, at the [E3 Electronic Entertainment Expo](#) in Los Angeles, a select band of journalists road-tested the PSVR while playing upcoming horror-survival game [Resident Evil 7](#) .

It turned into a PR nightmare for the title's makers Capcom, however, when a large number of writers began to suffer from "motion sickness".

Jessica Conditt, who works for the [Engadget](#) website, reported: "A third of the way through the demo, I suddenly felt feverish.

"The first wave of nausea crashed over me shortly after I climbed the stairs for the first time, my head tilted upward as I peered around a dark loft space occupied by a group of naked mannequins. I wondered if I was coming down with the flu.

"Two minutes later, I was barely paying attention to the game. My stomach churned and my skin steamed. Ten minutes into the demo, I knew that if I put the PS VR back on, I was going to puke all over Sony's media lounge.



Playstation VR (Photo: Sony)

"I was on the brink of vomiting for 10 minutes following the demo."

Meanwhile Dr Allamby says cases of juveniles suffering short-sightedness have already doubled over the past three decades in the UK, and that's before the effects of VR come into play.

Instead, it's largely thanks to a boom in smartphones, along with the rise of digital "tablets" and an increase in young children failing to play outside in natural light.

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He adds: "Parents are under huge pressure to buy their children smartphones and as sales continue to rise, so too will the number of children suffering from myopia.

"Myopia used to stop developing in people's early 20s but now it is now seen progressing throughout the 20s, 30s, and even 40s.



SteamVR featuring the HTC Vive (Photo: SteamVR featuring the HTC Vive)

"As recently as 10 years ago, children would have only been in front of a screen when watching television, but now they are moving from the TV screen to a tablet and now, increasingly, using a smartphone too - probably just a few inches from their eyes.

"The length of time children now spend in front of those screens will be doing them damage.

"What can help is spending more time in natural light. Dopamine is produced in the eye in response to sunlight, and acts in the retina as a neurotransmitter which helps different cells talk to each other.

"And dopamine is also important in deciding how the eye develops. In particular, dopamine is a vital aspect in how the eye grows, and if it develops refractive error.

"It affects the size of the eye. And the length of the eye is the important determining factor in how the eye focuses light and what the prescription of the eye might be.



Oculus Rift controller (Photo: OculusRift VR)

"So when it comes to ensuring your child is spending time outdoors, it really is a case of the earlier the better, and you should continue that into adolescence."

Sony's PSVR isn't the only virtual reality headset to launch in the UK.

The much-heralded Oculus Rift - for use with PCs and costing £550 - was [released in Britain in September](#) , though sales have so far been slow.

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The HTC Vive also went on sale in the UK earlier this year, and recently picked up the award for [Gadget of the Year at the T3 awards](#).

The Oculus Rift and HTC Vive have also both been accused of causing "eye strain" by some users.

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