

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LED LIGHTING

The age of LED lighting is here, and along with its many positive attributes, like long life and low power consumption, there are also some downsides of which you should be aware, such as potential excessive glare and health issues.

The glare we experience when we look into a bright LED light can range from being an annoyance, to being downright intolerable, to "blinding", and thereby preventing us from being able to see well enough to perform a task or to be safe while walking or driving. Some people are very sensitive to glare, regardless of age, but that sensitivity is especially prevalent among the elderly, people on some medications or with illnesses, or who are overly tired. Regaining proper vision after experiencing excessive glare, like when driving past a glaring floodlight, can take as long as 2 minutes, and in the meantime you might be temporarily "blinded."

LED lights come in a range of colors, from warm, like the light from a traditional incandescent bulb, to very cold and bluish. According to the AMA, having bright light, particularly light that is rich in blue wavelengths, in your home at night, especially in the bedroom and bathroom, upsets our biological clock and can be bad for our health. When buying light bulbs, note the color rating. Choose one rated "2700K" or "3000K" that emits a warmer colored light, rather than 4000K or 5000K that emits colder bluish light.

LED light bulbs are made up of many little diodes, each like a little spotlight, aiming its light in a particular direction. Such "spotlights" can be a considerable source of glare, causing annoyance and impacting our ability to see effectively. Buy outdoor lights that shield the light bulb from view, that keep your light from shining to your neighbor's property and into their bedroom windows, so their sleep isn't disrupted, and shut the lights off by 10:30 PM, or put them on a motion detector.

And lastly, there's the negative environmental impact. More than 50% of living creatures do their feeding and hunting under the protection of darkness, and when bluish LED lighting turns their nocturnal habitat into day, those creatures' lives are negatively impacted. Cold, bluish LED lighting is not good for the environment.

Bottom line: LEDs are a great advance in lighting, but can be a considerable source of annoying or even blinding glare that can impact the well-being of you and your neighbors and the environment. Use bulbs with a 2700K and 3000K color temperature rating or are labeled "soft white" or "warm white", use lights that shield the bulbs from direct view and their light output from trespassing onto your neighbor's property and windows. Shut them off by 10:30, or 11 at the latest, each night, to protect the natural environment. If family members typically arrive late at night, use motion detectors to turn them on and off automatically.

For more helpful information about best outdoor-lighting practices, please visit our website at www.polcouncil.org.