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Vision Health

**Be cool:
Wear shades**

Headed outside to soak up some rays? Have fun, but be sure to wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat. Your vision will thank you someday. During the summer, the level of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is three times greater than in the winter. And, since most people spend more time outside during the warm weather, we're getting even more exposure than we do in, say, January. Too much exposure without protection may cause conditions that can lead to vision loss such as cataracts, age-related macular degeneration, and growths, including cancer. That's over the long term, but even a day without protection isn't good. Like skin, the eye surface can burn. The solutions: Sport sunglasses, and don a wide-brimmed hat. Don't be fooled by cloudy days, either. The invisible rays are just as present then.



Selecting Sunglasses



When it comes to sunglasses, the lens color and the price don't matter.

The ability to block UV light doesn't depend on the darkness of the lens. Many \$10 sunglasses provide just as much protection — or sometimes even more — than a \$100 pair. Look for glasses that block 99 to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays. You may even want to go for the wrap-around style so the rays can't enter from the sides.

Finding Shade

UV rays are the strongest from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., so you may want to limit your time in the sun during these midday hours. This is especially true for kids, whose eyes are more sensitive. If you're headed to the beach or going on a fishing trip, you should also know that light reflected off water can be the most dangerous of UV light because it is intensified.

In the blink of an eye

If you work for long stretches on a computer, take an eye break at least once an hour. Shift your vision to something farther away, and consciously blink every few seconds.

Most people don't blink normally when they do prolonged close-up work. You might blink less than once every 10 seconds while working on a computer, and that's not enough to lubricate the eyes.

Source: University of Maryland School of Medicine, Brett Levinson, MD



A Look at kids' eye troubles

Kids may have eye issues even if they don't complain or show any signs. Proper health care should include routine eye exams.

Children should be tested at least once between the ages of 3 and 5, and then periodically throughout the school years (based on your eye doctor's recommendation). Some eye professionals suggest getting eyes checked earlier, but there isn't enough current evidence to determine whether an exam before age 3 has benefits.

In addition to regular checkups, if one or more of these signs appear, take your child to an eye doctor right away.

- ✓ Eyes are watery, red, and/or inflamed.
- ✓ Eyelids are red-rimmed, crusted, or swollen.
- ✓ Eyes don't line up — one eye appears crossed or looks out.
- ✓ Your child rubs eyes frequently.
- ✓ Your child blinks more than usual or seems cranky when doing close-up work.
- ✓ Your child says things are blurry or hard to see.
- ✓ Your child closes or covers one eye.
- ✓ Your child tilts head or pushes head forward.
- ✓ Your child has trouble reading or doing other close-up work, or holds objects close to eyes to see.
- ✓ Your child squints eyes or frowns.
- ✓ Your child says, "My eyes are itchy," "My eyes are burning," or "My eyes feel scratchy."
- ✓ After doing close-up work, your child says "I feel dizzy," "I have a headache," or "I feel sick/nauseous."
- ✓ Your child says, "Everything looks blurry," or "I see double."

Source: Prevent Blindness America



Myths about childrens' eyes

Here are 2 common misunderstanding about children's eye health.

Myth: Sitting too close to the TV will damage a child's eyes.

Fact: Children can develop blurred vision, headaches, and other problems when focusing too long on one object, such as a computer screen, but screen time will not permanently damage a child's eyes. With that said, however, you may want to try using the 20/20 rule when it comes to watching TV. Have your child take a 20-second break for every 20 minutes of screen time, either by getting up and stretching or by looking out the window.

Myth: Eating lots of carrots will improve a child's eyesight.

Fact: Eating a lot of carrots will not improve eyesight.

Source: The Vision Center at the Children's Hospital Los Angeles



Low vision awareness



Anytime you have a change in your vision, you need to get it checked out. There are a number of eye conditions; one is low vision.

What is low vision?

Low vision means that even with regular glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, you have difficulty with everyday tasks.

How do you know if you have low vision?

Even with regular glasses, do you have trouble:

- Recognizing faces of friends and relatives?
- Doing things that require you to see well up close, such as reading, cooking, or fixing things around the house?
- Doing tasks at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to?
- Matching the color of your clothes?
- Reading street and bus signs or the names of stores?

What causes low vision?

Low vision can result from various eye diseases, disorders, and injuries. Many people with low vision have age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy. Age-related macular degeneration accounts for almost 45% of all cases of low vision.

Source: National Eye Institute