Eye Health Tips

Take care of your eyesight. Follow these tips for keeping your eyes healthy and your vision at its best.

Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

You might think your vision is fine or that your eyes are healthy, but visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to really make sure. When it comes to refractive errors, some people don't realize they aren't seeing as well as they could with glasses or contact lenses. In terms of eye disease, many common eye diseases (glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, and age-related macular degeneration) often have no warning signs. Your eye care professional is the only one who can determine if your eyes are healthy and if you're seeing your best.

Eat right to protect your sight.

You've heard that carrots are good for your eyes. But eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, is important for keeping your eyes healthy, too. Research has also shown that there are eye health benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids.

Maintain a healthy weight.

Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma. If you are having trouble maintaining a healthy weight, talk to your doctor.

Wear protective eyewear.

Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home. Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards specially designed to provide the correct protection for a certain activity. Most protective eyewear lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is 10 times stronger than other plastics. Many eye care providers sell protective eyewear, as do sporting goods stores.

Quit smoking or never start.

Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataract, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

Be cool and wear your shades.

Sunglasses are a great fashion accessory, but their most important job is to protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays. When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100% of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

Give your eyes a rest.

If you spend a lot of time at the computer or focusing on any one thing, your eyes can get fatigue and you sometimes forget to blink. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This can help reduce eyestrain.

Clean your hands and your contact lenses…properly.

To avoid the risk of infection, always wash your hands thoroughly before putting in or taking out your contact lenses. Make sure to disinfect them as instructed and replace them as appropriate.

Know your family's eye health history.

Talk to your family about their eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with a disease or condition since many are often hereditary. This will help you determine if you are at higher risk for developing an eye disease or condition.

National Institutes of Health, National Eye Institute. (n.d.). *Eye health tips*. Retrieved December 11, 2009, from http://www.nei.nih.gov