

HEALTHLINE

Protect Your Vision



By Dr. Joseph Zobian, M.D.

Our eyes are precious. Human beings rely more on sight than any other sense. Regular eye examinations are an easy way to help assure a lifetime of clear vision. Sadly, many people don't realize how important it is to take care of their eyes until it's too late.

As an ophthalmologist, I specialize in the examination and treatment of eyes, for both children and adults. We perform cataract, pterygium, glaucoma and laser surgeries, as well as provide routine examinations and eyeglass prescriptions.

Most patients have healthy eyes, and may require only glasses or eye drops. But quite often we identify a problem that, if left undiagnosed and untreated, may have led to permanent loss of vision. That's why

it is so important to have regular eye examinations. Many people developing eye diseases may not even realize they have a problem until it's too late. This is particularly common when it comes to diabetes and glaucoma.

Prevention, early diagnosis and treatment are critical to good health. Here are some tips to maintain healthy eyes and avoid problems:

- Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. While you might think that your eyes are fine, the only way to be certain is to be examined. During the examination, drops may be placed in your eyes to dilate or widen the pupil. This allows the doctor a better view of the back of your eye, particularly the retina and optic nerve. The doctor can then look for eye problems such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease and age-related macular degeneration, which can develop without the patient even knowing. If caught early, these conditions can be treated suc-

cessfully.

- Know your family's eye health history. Genetics often play a role in our health, and this holds true with our eyes. Talk to your family members and find out if they have been diagnosed with a disease or condition. This will help determine if you are at higher risk.
- Eat right. Having a diet rich in fruits and vegetables high in vitamin A, such as carrots and dark leafy greens, can help keep your eyes healthy. You can also ask your doctor if vitamin supplementation is recommended.
- Exercise. Obesity is very common and increases the risk of developing diabetes and hypertension, which can lead to vision loss. Controlling blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol can protect you from many eye diseases. Diabetes is a major cause of blindness. Hypertension and high cholesterol can cause problems in the blood



vessels of the eye just like the blood vessels of the heart.

- Wear sunglasses when outdoors. Just like the skin, the eyes get damaged when exposed to too much sun, increasing our risk for eye diseases such as cataracts and pterygium. To protect your eyes, always wear sunglasses when in direct sunlight, particularly near the water. Look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.
- Use good eye hygiene. To reduce the risk of infection, always wash your hands thoroughly. Touching your eyes, nose and mouth with dirty hands is the most common method of transmitting colds, 'pink eye' and many other diseases. For those who wear contact lenses, disinfect them with cleaning solution every night, avoid sleeping with

them in and replace them regularly.

- Rest your eyes. Getting eight hours of sleep every night allows your body, mind and eyes to relax and recuperate. If you spend a lot of time on the computer, be sure to take breaks so your eyes don't get fatigued. Use the simple 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. Applying artificial tear drops is also helpful.
- Practice eye safety at home and at work. Whenever you are cleaning, cutting, hammering, sawing, etc. be sure to protect your eyes with proper safety glasses. Too many people ignore this advice until after they've been injured!

To find out more information about your eye health, talk with your doctor.

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