

HEALTHY EYE AND VISION PRACTICES

Your eyes are an integral part of your health and there are many simple things that can be done to keep them healthy and to ensure that you see your best.

Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. A comprehensive, dilated eye exam is the only way to be sure that your eyes are healthy and your vision is fine. Most times, with common vision problems, patients are unaware that they have an issue and that they can probably see better with glasses. Common eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration show no warning signs and only through a comprehensive dilated eye exam, would your ophthalmologist detect their early signs. Once detected early enough, these eye diseases can be treated and vision loss prevented.

To dilate your eyes, drops are placed to widen the pupil. This will allow more light into your eyes and will allow your ophthalmologist to see clearly, the back of your eyes. The effects of dilation are generally light sensitivity and blurry vision. These effects usually last for four to six hours.

Know your family's eye health history
Since many diseases or conditions are hereditary, in order to determine if you are at a higher risk of developing them, it is vital to ask family members about their eye health history. Glaucoma, one of the world's leading causes of blindness, is hereditary and as such, emphasis should be placed on knowing your family eye health history.

Eat right and maintain a healthy weight
Carrots are not the only vegetable good for your eyes. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables, especially dark, leafy vegetables and foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and tuna, is recommended for healthy eyes. Maintaining a healthy weight decreases the risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions. These can lead to vision loss due to diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.

Quit smoking or never start
Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has found that smokers are three to four times more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration, twice as likely to develop Dry Eye Syndrome and three times as likely to develop cataracts than non-smokers. Complications of diabetes are made worse by smoking and as such will increase the risk of glaucoma and optic nerve damage, both of which can lead to blindness.

Wear protective eyewear
Sunglasses are not only a great fashion accessory, but they play a vital role in protecting your eyes from the sun's UV rays. Even if it is a cloudy day, sunglasses should be worn. Ensure that you wear protective eyewear when doing certain activities at work, playing sports, or even around the home. Safety glasses, goggles, safety shields, and eye guards are designed to provide the correct protection for their intended purpose.

Rest your eyes
When spending a lot of time looking at screens (on

your phone, computer or even television) you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes become fatigued. To help reduce eyestrain, take frequent breaks, blink more often and try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, gaze at an object about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds.

Wash your hands
Never touch your eyes with dirty hands. Always wash your hands before inserting or removing your contact lenses and ensure that you sanitise/disinfect contact lenses and store them as instructed.

**Article submitted by
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It is important to visit your eye doctor to learn how to keep your eyes healthy. For more information on caring for your eyes, you can visit our website at www.trinidadseyehospital.org.



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