

# COVID-19 & Your Eyes

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Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease and the best way to prevent and slow transmission is to be aware of how the virus spreads and to take necessary precautions. You can protect yourself by washing your hands or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and by not touching your face.

The virus spreads through mucous membranes- mouth, nose or eyes. When a sick person coughs or speaks, virus particles can spray onto another person's face or even on surrounding surfaces. It is important to cough or sneeze into a flexed elbow and/or a single-use tissue. It is imperative that you avoid touching your face. Since the virus can linger on some surface for an extended period of time, you can also get the infection through the eye by touching a contaminated surface and then touching our eyes. The practice of physical distancing is of utmost importance to decrease transmission since COVID-19 is spread mainly through respiratory droplets, particularly when people cough or sneeze.

We know it's hard to avoid touching your eyes and face since it's difficult to break this natural habit, but doing so will reduce your risk.

One recommendation is to switch to glasses for some time if you wear contact lenses. This will help reduce the number of times you touch your eyes and the glasses may add a layer of protection. It can also serve as a barrier to help remind you not to touch your eyes.

Dry eyes can cause more discomfort and cause you to touch your eyes so keep using your eye lubricants.

Continue to use your medication as prescribed and be sure to stock up on your critical medications so as to not interrupt your treatment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many of us to stay at home. With this increased period of being at home here are some tips on being careful with your eyes during this time:

- Beware of chemical and cleaning sprays around your eyes. Pay attention to wind direction when spraying in order to avoid blow back.
- When playing with kids, don't push yourself beyond your physical capabilities which can cause eye injuries from slips, trips and falls
- When playing with kids, be cautious of projectiles like balls or nerf gun bullets
- Protect your eyes with sunglasses if gardening or doing any outdoor activity

Most ophthalmologists will be offering telemedicine – consultation via telephone – and offer onsite consultations to emergency and urgent care patients. You should still contact your doctor if you notice eye symptoms, especially if you have:

- Sudden loss of vision with pain
- Painful, red, swollen eye with reduced vision
- Shadows or curtaining in the field of vision with flashing lights and/or floaters
- Sudden loss of vision with no other symptoms
- Bleeding in the eye
- Severe pain in the eye
- Recent trauma to the eye
- Require regular eye injections

The Trinidad Eye Hospital is offering free emergency eye services. To access these services, call 234-4834 or WhatsApp 301-8080.