

ASK A DOC

BY THE BOCA GRANDE HEALTH CLINIC

Healthy eyes

According to the Vision Council's latest Consumer inSights reports, 79 percent (204 million) of U.S. adults use a form of vision correction, whether that is eyeglasses, prescription sunglasses, reading glasses or contact lenses. Emily Haly, M.D. of the Boca Grande Health Clinic addresses common questions about eye health.

I think my eyesight is pretty good. When should I get an eye exam?

Even if you have good vision, the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that everyone have a complete eye exam by either an ophthalmologist or optometrist by the time they are 40, and those over the age of 50 should have a dilated eye exam every year. After age 60, you should get a dilated eye exam every year or two. Most people with diabetes or high blood pressure need to get a dilated exam at least once a year.

Some medications can affect your eyes, so it's a good idea to take a list of all your medications and share it with the doctor.

Are seniors more prone to eye issues?

As you age, you may notice changes in your vision. Even those with 20/20 vision can struggle to read the tiny printing on our prescription bottles, but you may find that seeing up close is becoming an issue. With age, some have trouble distinguishing colors, such as blue from black, or need more time to adjust to changing levels of light. These problems are normal and are often easily corrected with readers, prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses, and improved lighting.

Some changes to our eyes are more serious, and the risk for some eye diseases and conditions does increase as you grow older. According to the National Institutes of Health, the most common causes of vision loss in seniors are age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. While many eye diseases become more common with age, most vision loss is

8 TIPS FOR EYE HEALTH



 REGULARY EYES CHECKING	 PROPER LIGHTING
 BLINK FREQUENTLY	 WEAR SUNGLASSES ON SUNNY DAY
 DISTANCE ADJUSTMENT	 GAZE FOR A GREEN TREE
 EYES EXERCISING	 EAT HEALTHY FOOD

preventable or treatable.

Who is most at risk for eye diseases?

Certain factors can increase your risk of developing eye diseases, including a personal or family history of eye disease, or if you are African American or Mexican American. Diabetes can lead to diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma or cataracts. You should talk to your doctor about the risks associated with a job that's visually demanding, such as using the computer all day.

How can I protect my eyes?

In addition to having your eyes checked regularly by an eyecare professional, there are several simple things you can do to keep your eyes healthy. If you smoke, please stop. Smoking makes you more likely to get cataracts, damage to your optic nerve and macular degeneration, among the many other health problems associated with smoking.

A healthy, nutrient-rich diet of omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zinc and vitamins C and E are believed to help ward off age-related vision problems like macular degeneration and cataracts. You can find these in foods like green, leafy vegetables, salmon, tuna and other oily fish, plus eggs, nuts and beans.

Staring at a computer screen for long periods of

time can cause eye strain, dry eyes and even blurriness of vision. It's important to take breaks from the computer and rest your eyes.


What should I look for in sunglasses?

The best sunglasses are ones that help protect your eyes from the sun's rays. Look for sunglasses that block 99 percent to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays. Wraparound glasses help protect your eyes from the side. Polarized sunglasses are great at reducing glare while you drive but shouldn't be considered a replacement for glasses that provide the right UV protection.

Do you have a question for us? If so, please send questions to the Clinic at bghc.org/contact or to the Boca Beacon and we will answer them.

'Ask A Doc' was an original creation of the late Hank Wright, MD, as "Curbstone Consult," and is brought to you by the Boca Grande Health Clinic. Do you have a medical or healthcare question you'd like answered? Just email your question to 'Ask A Doc' at the Boca Grande Health Clinic at bghc.org/contact or to mshortuse@bocabeacon.com, or submit it by mail to Ask A Doctor, c/o the Boca Beacon, P.O. Box 313, Boca Grande, FL 33921. To ensure your privacy, your name will not be used in the printed response.

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