



491 30th Street,  
Suite 201  
Oakland, CA  
94609  
Ph: (510) 836-2122  
Fax: (510) 836-3773

## Eye Care Fundamentals

How can you keep your eyes healthy? It's a tall order. Our eyes have remarkable complexity, with optically clear components and dynamic neurologic control systems that ideally yield clear images with near-perfect depth perception. Our genes influence which diseases our eyes are likely to suffer, but our environment and our behaviors are important too. We are on the cusp of being able to alter our hereditary factors through genetic manipulation, but at present, the only risk factors we can modify come from our behaviors and environmental exposures.

Here are some strategies you can use to protect your eyes:

### *Wear sunglasses outside*

Research has shown linkage between ultraviolet light exposure and development of cataract, macular degeneration, basal cell skin cancer, melanoma of the eye and skin and premature aging. Wearing UV-blocking sunglasses may help protect your eyes from sun damage.

### *Avoid eye trauma*

Sometimes, activities that are dangerous for your eyes can be avoided by thinking ahead and anticipating the serious consequences. Running with sharp scissors and playing with knives, darts or BB guns are all activities that may result in eye injury. If potentially dangerous activities can't be avoided, use eye protection, like safety glasses. These safety glasses are made from special, impact-resistant plastics like polycarbonate, which won't shatter like lenses made from glass or standard resin. People who use power tools or carpentry tools, metalworkers, grinders, sculptors and gardeners should use safety glasses when they are working in order to deflect metal, wood, or stone chips which can scratch the eye or become embedded in it. Injuries like this are intensely



painful and can cause infection and blindness, even when treated promptly.

### *Watch out for chemical burns*

Don't use caustic liquids unless it's unavoidable and you've taken safety precautions. Chemicals like strong acids (muriatic acid, sulfuric acid) and strong bases (ammonia, lye) are still quite common in household and office products. Car batteries and pool cleaners contain dangerous acids, while chlorine bleach and drain cleaners are dangerous for the eyes and skin because of the strong alkaline chemicals they contain. Consider safer alternative products. If you must use caustic agents or have them in the home, do so with care. Take safety precautions like using safety glasses, latex gloves, long sleeves and good ventilation to protect yourself. Keep the chemicals in a locked cabinet, out of reach of children and pets.

### *Eat a healthy diet*

Like the rest of the body, the eyes require vitamins and minerals for optimal functioning and to avoid disease. The importance of Vitamin A for good vision is well-known; most people don't realize that nutrients like Vitamin C and other anti-oxidants may reduce the risk of cataract and macular degeneration. Taking a multi vitamin every day may provide assurance that your intake of essential nutrients is adequate, even if your regular diet is not.

### *See your eye doctor at regular intervals*

Some eye disorders have warning signs—pain, redness, blurred vision, sensitivity to light, discharge or a sudden decrease in the size of the field of vision. These kinds of symptoms, among others, should lead to prompt examination by an ophthalmologist. Other eye disorders usually don't have such dramatic symptoms. Glaucoma, for example, is often called the "thief of sight" because most people who have it don't realize they do until they have permanently lost significant vision. It happens without pain and so slowly it isn't noticeable. Ask your eye specialist how often your eyes need to be examined to keep them healthy.