Healthy Vision Month

More than 20 million Americans suffer from severe vision loss. While not all eye diseases can be prevented, there are simple steps that everyone can take to help their eyes remain healthy now and reduce their chances of vision loss in the future.

Here are the top 10 tips from the American Academy of Ophthalmology to safeguard your vision:

**Wear sunglasses**—UV blocking sunglasses delay the development of cataracts, retinal damage, wrinkles, and both cancerous and non-cancerous growths on the eye.

**Don’t smoke**—Tobacco smoking is directly linked to many adverse health effects, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Studies show that current smokers and ex-smokers are more likely to develop AMD than people who have never smoked. Smokers are also at increased risk for developing cataracts.

**Eat right**—Vitamin deficiency can impair retinal function. The belief that eating carrots improves vision has some truth, but a variety of vegetables, especially leafy green ones, should be an important part of your diet. The nutritional components of these vegetables help deter the development of early and advanced AMD.

**Baseline eye exam**—Adults with no signs or risk factors for eye disease should get a baseline eye disease screening at age 40—the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur.

Based on the screening results, your eye care provider will prescribe the necessary intervals for follow-up exams.

**Eye protection**—An estimated 2.5 million eye injuries occur in the U.S. each year, so it is critical to wear proper eye protection to avoid eye injuries while playing sports and working on home projects.

**Know your family history**—Many eye diseases cluster in families, so be aware of any family history because you may be at increased risk.

**Early intervention**—Most serious eye conditions, such as glaucoma and AMD, are more easily and successfully treated if diagnosed and treated early. Left untreated, these diseases can cause serious vision loss and blindness.

**Know your eye care provider**—All providers play an important role in providing eye care services. Each has a different level of expertise. Make sure you are seeing the right provider for your condition or treatment.

**Contact lens care**—Follow your provider’s instructions regarding the care and use of contact lenses. Not doing so can result in corneal ulcers, severe pain and even vision loss.

**Be aware of eye fatigue**—If your eyes are tired from working at a computer or doing close work, you can follow the 20-20-20 rule: Look up from your work every 20 minutes at an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology
Ophthalmic Medical Personnel

Ophthalmic medical personnel or technicians work as part of our eye care team to provide patient care. Our technicians take patient histories, perform various procedures and tests to prepare patients for their exam by the doctor, assist in surgical procedures, provide patient education, assist in supervising/training other ophthalmic technicians, and participate in numerous community outreach activities.

The technicians at the Penn State Hershey Eye Center have learned and mastered their skills through on-the-job training, completion of an accredited ophthalmic medical assisting program, and/or through independent study programs. The Joint Commission on Allied Health Personnel in Ophthalmology (JCAHPO) offers certification and continuing education opportunities. All of the technicians at our Eye Center are JCAHPO-certified ophthalmic assistants. They have passed rigorous testing to earn their certification and continue to update their skills/knowledge to be recertified every three years. Each year, two of the technicians attend the national JCAHPO conference to network with other eye care professionals and expand their knowledge base. Dr. James Wilmarth, our technicians, and our ophthalmic photographers are actively involved in organizing and teaching at the Annual Educational Update for Ophthalmic Medical Personnel, a full day continuing education program sponsored by our Center and attended by more than 100 technicians from Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. Center attendees at last year’s program are seen above.

Source: JCAHPO and Corrina Reeves, COA, Penn State Hershey Eye Center

Interesting Facts

Did you know that . . .

- Owls have eyeballs that are tubular in shape and surrounded by a bony structure so they can only look straight ahead and cannot “roll” their eyes. Their long and flexible necks allow them to turn their heads through a 270 degree range. They have a large cornea and pupil and an abundance of light sensitive cells in their retinas which enhances their night vision capabilities. Owls also have 3 eyelids: an upper lid closing when they blink, a lower lid closing when they sleep, and a third lid closing diagonally across the eye to clean and protect its surface.

What’s happening in Eye Care Research?

Clinical trials that are currently underway at the Penn State Hershey Eye Center are listed on the website of the Clinical Trials Office along with contact information for each study at:

http://www.pennstatehershey.org/web/eyecenter/research/clinicaltrials

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