A Healthy Lifestyle is Good for Your Eyes!

There are several lifestyle choices you can make for yourself and for your family to reduce the risk of getting eye diseases. You have heard most of this advice before in other places, because what’s good for you in general is also good for your eyes.

Stop Smoking

The most important risk factor under your control is the decision not to smoke. In addition to causing heart and lung disease, smoking has been shown to be a causative factor for age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts, and Fuchs endothelial corneal dystrophy.

Watch Your Weight

The next most important thing you can do for yourself is to maintain a healthy body weight. Being overweight often leads to diabetes, which in the eye, specifically, causes diabetic retinopathy and cataract. Eat reasonably sized portions of healthy foods and get some exercise. Because you probably determine what your children eat, at least at home, prepare wholesome foods for them, in reasonable portions. And set a good example for your children when you eat together.

Protect Yourself from the Sun

Wear sunglasses and/or hats with brims when you go out in the sun. Even more importantly, protect your kids’ eyes in the same way; the damaging, high-energy rays of the sun penetrate farther into children’s eyes causing long-term damage.
Detach at perforation and take this list with you when you visit your eye doctor.

- **Do I need glasses?**
  - If so, for near-sightedness, far-sightedness, astigmatism, or presbyopia?
- **Do you see any sign of problems in my eyes?**
  - Cataract?
  - Macular degeneration?
  - Glaucoma? Is my eye pressure normal?
  - Dry eye?
  - Early signs of other diseases?
- **Are there any medical conditions that I should be concerned about because of anything you noted during my eye exam?**
  - Diabetes?
  - Hypertension?
  - High cholesterol?
- **When should I return for a follow-up exam?**
- **When should I have my pupils dilated for a full exam of my retina?**
- **Are there any eye diseases for which my family is at risk (e.g., age-related macular degeneration, genetic eye disease, or glaucoma)?**

### Six Signs of Eye Disease

- **Decreased vision**
  - Difficulty seeing while reading, watching TV, driving, at work, or during recreation
  - Loss of peripheral or central vision
  - A curtain or veil coming over vision
  - Difficulty seeing to the side (e.g., when changing lanes in traffic)
  - Check for differences in the vision of each eye by covering them one-at-a-time

- **Eye pain**
  - Sharp or dull pain
  - Persistent pain
  - Eye hurts when touched
  - Persistent feeling that something is in the eye
  - Any eye pain, especially if associated with any of the other warning signs listed here

- **Drainage from the eye or redness of the eye**
  - Crusting of the eye, especially in the morning
  - Discharge from the eye, especially if associated with pain

- **Floaters and flashes**
  - Spider webs, dots, and floating matter that move
  - Flashing or flickering lights

- **Seeing halos around lights**
  - May be only present in the morning and improve later in the day
  - Increased glare, e.g., when looking at the headlights of oncoming cars

- **Double vision**
  - Seeing two images, which may be side-by-side, up-and-down, or sideways
  - May resolve when you cover one eye

### Six Things You Can Do to Protect Your Family’s Eye Health

- **Learn your family history of eye disease**
- **Schedule eye exams for the whole family**
- **Protect yourself and your family from eye injuries**
  - Wear, and insist on, protective safety goggles for sports, recreation, as well as when working with tools, metal, or chemicals at home or school
  - Store household chemicals (e.g., cleaners, paints, fertilizers) safely
  - Take steps to avoid exposure to pellet guns, bb guns, bow & arrows, toys with missiles, and fireworks (These items can cause serious eye injury)
- **Protect yourself and your family from excess sun exposure**
  - Wear sunglasses and/or a hat with a brim when outdoors
- **Adopt a healthy lifestyle**
  - Stop smoking or never start
  - Drink alcohol only in moderation
  - Maintain a healthy body weight by eating a balanced diet that includes fruits and vegetables. Exercise regularly.
- **Know and act upon the warning signs of eye disease**
  - See middle panel

For more information we invite you to visit our website at: www.womenseyehealth.org