

Top tips for healthy eyes

1 Have regular sight tests

As well as an eye health check, a sight test might help detect signs of underlying general health conditions, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Everyone should have a sight test every two years, or more often if your optometrist recommends it.

2 Eat healthily

Eating a healthy, balanced diet reduces your risk of eye disease. Include lots of omega-3 fats, found in oily fish, and lutein, found in dark-green, leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale. Vitamins A, C and E are also helpful, so eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. If you have a family history of macular degeneration (losing central vision in the eyes), ask your optometrist about taking nutritional supplements.

3 Wear prescribed glasses

Many eye and vision problems develop or increase as we get older. Contrary to the myth, wearing glasses and contact lenses doesn't make your eyesight worse – they help your eyes work more efficiently.

4 Take regular breaks

When you work on something close up, such as a computer, tablet or smartphone, your eye muscles are active. This may cause tiredness and headaches, even in those with normal sight. Follow the 20/20/20 rule – every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away, for 20 seconds. And don't forget to blink, as this helps prevent your eyes drying out.

5 Wear sunglasses

As well as making your vision more comfortable in the sun, sunglasses protect your eyes from UV light. When choosing sunglasses, you should always make sure that they carry the CE or British Standard marks. There are different categories of sunglasses to choose from, including everyday wear, as well as frames for specialist sports. Exposure to UV when young does most harm, so protect children with sunglasses, as well as a hat and sunblock.

7 Stop smoking

Many people are unaware of the link between smoking and eye disease. If you smoke, stop. Smoking significantly increases the risk of developing eye diseases, such as cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. However long you have smoked it's never too late to benefit from quitting and reducing your risk.

8 Avoid dry eyes

Eyes become dry, tired and sore if you are not producing enough tears or you have poor-quality tears. Central heating, air-conditioning and computer use can make it worse. Many adults suffer with dry eyes due to a health condition or medication. Lubricating eye drops can soothe irritation and reduce discomfort. You may find taking omega-3 supplements helps over time. Drink plenty of water and remember to blink often. If your eyes are persistently dry, tell your optometrist.

9 Research your family history

Many eye conditions run in families, from simple long and short sight to more serious diseases, such as glaucoma. Knowledge of problems with sight can help detect a condition before it becomes serious.

Your optometrist is the first person you should visit if you have any eye concerns. They can assess the problem and, if necessary, refer you to the right place for treatment.

About the AOP

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the voice of the optical profession, representing over 80% of practising optometrists. The AOP elevates the work of its members, safeguards their interests, and champions eye health across the UK. For more information, visit www.aop.org.uk