

Eye on Health

Five Tips to Spring-Clean Your Eye Health

(NAPS)—Spring is an annual reminder of new beginnings. With new life and fresh blooms all around, it also serves as a reminder to spring-clean our overall health, which also includes the eyes.

Among older people, vision loss—or even worse, blindness—can have a negative impact on our quality of life, limiting the ability to do things we enjoy such as reading, driving, or seeing our grandchildren.

The good news is, many sight-stealing conditions can be prevented or slowed down with proper care. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends these five tips to spring-clean your eye health:

1. Schedule an eye exam by an ophthalmologist. A medical doctor who specializes in medical and surgical eye care.

2. Pay attention to what you eat. Include plenty of citrus fruits, vegetable oils, nuts, whole grains, dark green leafy vegetables and cold water fish in your diet. Healthy body equals healthy eyes.

3. Exercise regularly. Not only does it help your heart and energy levels, many studies have shown that getting regular exercise can benefit your eyes.

4. Wear sunglasses. Sunglasses protect your eyes from cataracts and even eye cancers. Be sure to wear sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection, and a hat while outdoors.

5. Don't smoke. Smoking increases the risk for eye diseases like cataract and age-related macular degeneration and raises the risks for heart diseases that indirectly influence eye health. Tobacco smoke, including second-hand smoke, also worsens dry eye.

For those concerned about the cost of an exam, the American Academy of Ophthalmology's EyeCare America® program may be able to help. Nearly 6,000 dedicated volunteer ophthalmologists provide eye exams and care, often at no out-of-pocket cost to eligible patients. Since 1985, the program has helped more than 1.8 million people in need.



To protect your sight, it's smart to see an eye care professional. For some people, the exam can be free.

EyeCare America serves US citizens or legal residents who do not belong to an HMO.

To be eligible for the Seniors program

- Must be age 65 or older, and
- Last eye exam by an ophthalmologist must be 3 or more years

To be eligible for the Glaucoma program

- Must be 1 year since the patient's last eye exam, and
- Determined to be at increased glaucoma risk by age, race, and family history.

"Vision loss is also associated with a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions, falls, injuries, depression and social isolation," said Charles P. Wilkinson, M.D., chairman of EyeCare America. "Most people wait until they notice changes in vision loss, so it's important to maintain healthy eyes before signs and symptoms begin to show themselves."

Spring clean your eye health by scheduling an eye exam today. For more information about EyeCare America, visit www.aaopt.org/eyecareamerica.

EyeCare America is co-sponsored by the Knights Templar Eye Foundation Inc., with additional support provided by Alcon.