Eye On Health

Tips For Keeping Your Eyes In Tip-top Shape

(NAPSA)—Any time of year can be the right time to take a look at how you can maintain the health of your eyes. The good news is that there are simple steps you can follow to keep your eyes healthy and make sure you are seeing your best.

Here are some tips from the experts at the National Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health.

•**Have a comprehensive dilated eye exam.** Visiting your eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to really be sure your eyes are healthy. Many common eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease and age-related macular degeneration often have no warning signs.

•**Know your family's eye health history.** Talk to your family members about their eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with an eye disease or condition since many are hereditary.

•**Eat right to protect your sight.** Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, and collard greens, is important for keeping your eyes healthy. Research indicates there are also benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna and halibut.

•**Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other conditions, which can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.

•**Wear protective eyewear.** Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home or in the workplace. Make a habit of wearing the right type at all times.

•**Quit smoking or never start.** Research has linked smok-

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ing to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataracts and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.

•**Be cool and wear your shades.** Sunglasses protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays. Look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.

•**Give your eyes a rest.** If you spend a lot of time at the computer or focusing on any one thing, you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes can get fatigued. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This can help reduce eyestrain.

•**Clean your hands and your contact lenses—properly.** Always wash your hands thoroughly before putting in or taking out your contact lenses. Disinfect contact lenses as instructed and replace them as appropriate.

To learn more, visit www.nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes.