



# Wellness News

October 2016

## Dental and Vision Health

### Time for You and Eye

#### Eye exams can improve more than your vision

Even if you can see well, regular eye exams are important to help keep your eyes healthy — and catch other health problems early. Eye exams can:

Diagnose diseases, such as: <sup>1</sup>

- Glaucoma — pressure in the eye, which can harm the optic nerve
- Macular degeneration — changes in the retina that result in the slow loss of eyesight
- Cataracts — clouding of the eye lens, which can blur vision

Help spot other health problems that can also cause eye problems: <sup>2</sup>

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Certain cancers

Finding out about these problems early means you can get treatment early. This can help you get better and lower your health care costs.

#### Eye on the numbers

- **Over 81%** of Americans use some form of eyesight correction, such as glasses or contact lenses.<sup>3</sup>
- **Over 28 million** Americans over age 40 have eye problems that can lead to vision loss and blindness.
- Experts warn that the number will go up as people age.<sup>4</sup>
- **About 22 million** American adults have cataracts. It's the leading cause of blindness worldwide and of poor eyesight in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

#### Diabetes can put your eyes at risk

It can make you very sensitive to light and damage your retina (diabetic retinopathy). But think about this:

- Twenty-five percent of people with diabetes don't know they have it,<sup>6</sup> so they don't get the treatment and protection they need.
- Only 17% of diabetics know they can be more sensitive to light, so most of them don't protect their eyes by wearing sunglasses.<sup>7</sup>
- Forty percent of diabetics don't get a yearly eye exam.<sup>8</sup> This puts their eyes at risk.
- Proper vision care can stop more than 90% of vision loss and blindness caused by diabetic retinopathy.<sup>5</sup>

#### What you should do for your eyes

**Get a complete eye exam every year.** This may include dilation, where the pupil is dilated, or made bigger, so the retina can be checked for signs of eye disease and other health problems.

**Protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.** Over time, the sun's UV rays can damage your eyesight through cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Wear sunglasses that block 100% of UV rays, even on cloudy days.

**Protect your eyes from everyday bright light and glare.** They can make it hard to see and end up straining and tiring your eyes. If you wear eyeglasses, choose lenses that automatically adjust the tint based on the light around you. Move lamps, TVs and computer screens to reduce glare.

Sources: 1 National Eye Institute website: Age-Related Eye Diseases (accessed January 2015): [https://nei.nih.gov/healtheyes/aging\\_eye](https://nei.nih.gov/healtheyes/aging_eye). 2 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: Rising Healthcare Costs/Systemic Disease (accessed September 2014): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org). 3 American Optometric Association website: American Eye-Q Survey Executive Summary (May 2008): [aoa.org](http://aoa.org). 4 Archives in Ophthalmology website: Cause and Prevalence of Visual Impairment Among Adults in the United States (April 2004): [archophth.ama-assn.org](http://archophth.ama-assn.org). 5 National Institute of Health Medline Plus website: Leading Causes of Blindness (Summer 2008): <http://nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/magazine/issues/summer08/articles/summer08pg14-15.html>. 6 American Diabetes Association website: Diabetes Statistics (June 2014): [diabetes.org](http://diabetes.org). 7 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: Eye/Overall Health Connection (accessed January 2015): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org). 8 Transitions Healthy Sight Working For You website: Communicating the Value of Vision Benefits to Employers (accessed September 2014): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org).

### This issue

Time for You and Eye  
Not Just About Looking Cool  
Word of Mouth  
Food Day

### Get the Real "Word of Mouth"

#### Fact or fiction

Taking good care of my teeth and mouth can save me money.

#### Fact!

When you keep cavities and gum disease away, you can save money on costly fillings and other dental work. This is especially important for children and their long-term dental health.<sup>1</sup>

Brushing and flossing every day doesn't affect the rest of my body.

#### Fiction!

Your mouth health is connected to your overall health. Some diseases are actually linked to how well you care for your teeth and gums. These include diabetes, heart disease and cancer. When you take good care of your mouth, your whole body benefits!<sup>2</sup>

There's nothing I can do to stop cavities and tooth decay.

#### Fiction!

Fluoride is an important part of preventing tooth decay, especially for children. Fluoride is a mineral that strengthens teeth when you ingest it and also protects the surface of teeth from acid.<sup>3</sup> It's in some foods, but most places have fluoride in the drinking water, too. You can get fluoride toothpaste and rinses as well. Your dentist also can apply sealants to your child's back teeth where most cavities form.<sup>4</sup>

Source: 1 American Dental Association website: Healthy People 2020 oral health goals key on access to care (accessed July 2013): [ada.gov](http://ada.gov).

2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Women's Health: Oral Health Fact Sheet (accessed July 2013): [womenshealth.gov](http://womenshealth.gov).

3 KidsHealth website: Fluoride and Water (accessed August 2013): <http://kidshealth.org>.

## Protecting Your Eyes Is Not Just About Looking Cool

When you think of sun protection, you probably think about slathering on sunscreen during summer days, but **harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) rays occur year-round and are just as damaging to your eyes.** Less than 8% of adults know that the sun can harm the eyes.<sup>1</sup>

There are two types of UV rays. UVA rays can damage the macula (the center part of the retina). The macula is responsible for sharp, clear vision and the ability to see colors. UVB rays can damage the cornea and lens. The cornea is the eye's outermost layer and functions like a window that controls and focuses the entry of light into the eye. In addition to the damage of UV glare, bright light can decrease contrast, making it difficult to see objects clearly, and cause eyestrain and fatigue.

### Long-term damage from UV rays can lead to a number of diseases that can cause you to lose your vision, such as:

- **Cataracts:** A clouding of the eye's lens that can cause blurred vision. By age 40 and older, more than 20 million Americans will be affected by cataracts.<sup>2</sup>
- **Age-related macular degeneration (AMD):** Deterioration of the macula, which is part of the retina at the back of your eye, that leads to blurred, distorted vision and blind spots. About 11 million Americans have advanced AMD. Age is the biggest risk factor.<sup>3</sup>
- **Pterygium:** A growth in the corner of the eye that is usually not cancerous but can block vision and grow over the cornea.
- **Skin cancer around the eyelid:** More than half of all skin cancers around the eyelid appear on the lower lid, but they can show up anywhere around the eye.<sup>2</sup>
- **Photokeratitis:** "Sunburn" of the eye surface. The effect is temporary, but painful and the eyes become red, teary and sensitive to light.

### Protect your eyes from UV and glare with these simple steps:

- **Wear sunglasses** that block 100% of UV rays, even on cloudy days
- **Get Transitions® lenses for your prescription glasses.** They are as clear as regular lenses indoors, but turn as dark as sunglasses outdoors, depending on the strength of UV rays — reducing glare and making the eyes more comfortable. They also block 100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- **Choose bigger lenses to protect more of your eyes,** and wear a wide-brimmed hat to block UV rays from the top and sides of your face.
- **Get contact lenses that filter out UV,** but remember that they do not protect the area around the eyes. For complete eye protection, wear sunglasses that shield most of the eye as well.

Sources: Transitions Optical, Inc. website: SEE WELL, WORK WELL (accessed May 2015): [healthysightworkingforyou.org](http://healthysightworkingforyou.org). 2 The National Eye Institute website: More Americans Facing Blindness Than Ever Before (accessed May 2015): [nei.nih.gov](http://nei.nih.gov). 3 Bright Focus Foundation website: About Macular Degeneration. (August 23, 2013): [brightfocus.org](http://brightfocus.org).

## Recipe of the month

### Sautéed Veggie Toasts

#### Ingredients:

- 2 tsps. olive oil
- 1 zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup green bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup yellow bell pepper, thinly sliced
- 1 to 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 12 thin slices whole-grain baguette
- 1/2 cup tomato, diced
- 8 ozs. fresh mozzarella cheese, torn into pieces

#### Directions:

In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; add zucchini, bell peppers, and garlic. Cook, stirring, 5 minutes or until vegetables are very tender. Heat broiler. Lay baguette slices on a broiler pan, and broil 1 minute or just until lightly toasted. Meanwhile, stir tomato and cheese into skillet just to heat through; divide mixture evenly among toasts. Broil 3 minutes or just until heated through. Makes 12 toasts. Per toast: 140 calories.

Recipe provided by BSBSGa Healthy Options mobile app.

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### Family Health & Fitness Day USA<sup>1</sup>

Food Day inspires Americans to change their diets and our food policies. Every October 24, thousands of events all around the country bring Americans together to celebrate and enjoy real food and to push for improved food policies.

October 24 is a day to resolve to make changes in our own diets and to take action to solve food-related problems in our communities at the local, state, and national level. In 2015, Food Day has the theme "Toward a Greener Diet."

This annual event involves some of the country's most prominent food activists, united by a vision of food that is healthy, affordable, and produced with care for the environment, farm animals, and the people who grow, harvest, and serve it.

With Food Day, we can celebrate our food system when it works and fix it when it's broken. Across the country, more than 8,000 events took place in 2014, from community festivals in Denver, Savannah, and New York City, to a panel discussion on food justice in Washington, DC, to thousands of school activities in Portland, Minneapolis, and elsewhere. Hundreds of events are being planned on and around October 24, 2015, in all 50 states.

#### Why Food Day?

The typical American diet is contributing to obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and other health problems. Those problems cost Americans more than \$150 billion per year. Plus, a meat-heavy diet takes a terrible toll on the environment.

Eating Real can save your own health and put our food system on a more humane, sustainable path. With America's resources, there's no excuse for hunger, low wages for food and farm workers, or inhumane conditions for farm animals.

#### Join the Movement

The most important ingredient in Food Day is you! Use October 24 to start—or celebrate—eating a healthier diet and putting your family's diet on track. Food Day is not just a day; it's a year-long catalyst for healthier diets and a better food system. Let's use this energy to make a meaningful and long-lasting difference!

1 Article pulled from <http://www.foodday.org/about>.

## See Your Way to a Brighter Future

Don't lose sight of your eyes. Along with your annual checkup, be sure to get a professional eye exam every year. Your eyes also need daily protection, just like your skin. Wear sunglasses to shield them from the sun's dangerous ultraviolet rays.

And rest your eyes throughout the day. If you spend a lot of time looking at a computer, you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes get tired. So try to take frequent breaks from the screen.

You can also help your eyes stay healthy with the right lifestyle choices:

- Eat lots of fruits and veggies, which are rich in vitamins and minerals, and fish like salmon that are high in omega-3 fatty acids.
- Maintain a healthy weight. This lowers your risk for getting diabetes or other conditions that can lead to vision loss.
- Avoid eye injuries by using protective goggles or other gear when playing sports or working around chemicals and dust.

Quit smoking. Research has linked smoking to a higher risk of eye disease and cataracts.

## Healthy Hint #44