



## Tips for healthy eyes

### What can I do to look after my eyes?



#### **Eat healthily**

A healthy balanced diet, with a wide variety of fruit and vegetables, will benefit your overall health and may help to keep the retina healthy.

#### **Give up smoking**

Smokers are much more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration and cataracts compared to non-smokers.

#### **Get moving**

While it might seem odd that exercise can help the eyes, it can be important. Research shows that exercise may reduce the risk of sight loss which can occur from high blood pressure, diabetes and narrowing or hardening of the arteries.

#### **Protect your eyes from the sun**

Never look at the sun directly, even when something exciting is happening, such as an eclipse. Doing so can cause irreversible damage to your eyesight and even lead to blindness. Several studies also suggest that sunlight exposure is a risk factor for cataracts. It is advisable to wear sunglasses to help to protect your eyes from UV rays.

### **Have regular eye tests**

#### **Why are regular eye tests (sight tests) so important?**

It's easy to neglect your eyes because they rarely hurt when there's a problem.

Having an eye test won't only tell you if you need new glasses or a change of prescription, it's also an important eye health check. It can spot many general health problems and early signs of eye conditions (such as Glaucoma) before you're aware of any symptoms – many of which can be treated if found early enough.

#### **How often should I have an eye test?**

It's recommended that you have a sight test every two years (or more frequently if advised).

#### **Can I get help with the cost of a sight test or glasses?**

Lots of people are entitled to free NHS-funded sight tests and an optical voucher, which will help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses.

#### **What should I do if I notice a change in my sight?**

Visit your optician or GP if you're concerned with any aspect of your vision at any time.

### **Are some people more at risk from eye disease than others?**

Anyone can develop sight problems, but some people have a higher risk of eye disease. It's especially important to have regular eye tests if you are:

- above 60 years old
- from certain ethnic groups; for example, people from African-Caribbean communities are at greater risk of developing glaucoma and diabetes, and people from south Asian communities are at a greater risk of developing diabetes. Diabetic retinopathy, in which the retina becomes damaged, is a common complication of diabetes
- someone with a learning disability
- from a family with a history of eye disease

### **What about my child's sight?**

Children do not usually complain about their sight, but may show signs of not being able to see properly.

Things to look out for include sitting close to the TV, holding objects very close to their face, blinking a lot, eye rubbing, or one eye turning in or out.

Even if a child isn't experiencing problems at school, there are still good reasons to go for an eye test. Especially since certain conditions may only be detected by an eye examination. Also some common childhood eye conditions, such as amblyopia and strabismus, are only treatable if diagnosed at an early age. Moreover, starting regular eye tests early on establishes a good pattern for later life. What's more, in the UK, children are entitled to free eye tests on the NHS.