

## Set your sights on keeping your eyes healthy this year

Now that 2023 is here, you may be thinking about creating new healthy habits, such as exercising more or eliminating junk food and sweets from your diet. It's also the perfect time to consider ways you can maintain or improve your eye health. Your eyesight is one of your most important senses – 80% of what we perceive comes through our sense of sight.

Many of us assume that vision loss is a normal part of aging, but that's not the case. Most eye problems are preventable with simple healthy choices. Here are some tips for preserving your eyesight well into your golden years:

- **Get regular eye exams.** Since most eye diseases have no symptoms or warning signs, it's important to make sure you get your eyes checked every year even if they feel okay. An ophthalmologist can detect eye diseases early and provide effective treatment.
- **Know your family history.** Many eye conditions are inherited. For example, your risks of glaucoma and macular degeneration are higher if a family member has that condition.
- **Eat healthy.** Load up on fruits and vegetables filled with vitamins A, C and E because they are great for your eyes. Choose dark leafy greens like spinach and kale, which are high in antioxidants. Omega-3 fatty acids are also great for vision and eye health. They can be found in certain types of fish like salmon and tuna, as well as fatty nuts like almonds and walnuts.
- **Stay active.** Obesity and diabetes put you at higher risk for vision problems, which is why maintaining a healthy weight is so important. In fact, type 2 diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in adults.
- **Quit smoking.** If you smoke, it puts you at higher risk for cataracts, macular degeneration and optic nerve damage. It's yet another great reason why you should quit!
- **Control other health conditions.** High blood pressure and high blood sugar can affect eye health and put you at higher risk for vision loss.
- **Minimize eye strain.** Many of us stare at computers, smartphones and televisions throughout the day. Therefore, give your eyes a break with the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away, for 20 seconds. Also, make sure you are getting enough sleep to allow for proper eye rest.
- **Protect your eyes.** When outdoors, wear your sunglasses to avoid too much UV exposure. Don't forget to wear safety glasses when working or playing sports that present a risk of eye injury. Plus, if you wear contacts, keep them clean and fresh.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drinking water can help your body produce a healthy volume of tears, which is important to prevent dry eyes and inflammation.

By following these tips, you'll be able to keep your eyes in sharp focus and keep your healthy goals in sight throughout the new year and beyond.