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Eye Care Facts and Myths

Myth: Reading in dim light is harmful to your eyes.

Fact: Although reading in dim light can make your eyes feel tired, it is not harmful.

Myth: It is not harmful to watch a welder or look at the sun if you squint or look through narrowed eyelids.

Fact: Even if you squint, ultraviolet light still reaches your eyes, damaging the cornea, lens, and retina. Never watch welding without wearing the proper eye protection. Never look directly at a solar eclipse.

Myth: Using a computer screen is harmful to the eyes.

Fact: Although using a computer screen is associated with eyestrain or fatigue, it is not harmful to the eyes.

Myth: If you use your eyes too much, you will “wear them out.”

Fact: You can use your eyes as much as you want—you will not wear them out.

Myth: Wearing poorly fitting eyeglasses damages your eyes.

Fact: Although a good fit is required for good vision, a poor fit does not damage your eyes.

Myth: Wearing poorly fitting contact lenses does not harm your eyes.

Fact: Poorly fitting contact lenses can be harmful to your cornea, the clear front window of your eye. Make certain your ophthalmologist (Eye M.D.) checks your eyes regularly if you wear contact lenses.

Myth: You do not need to have your eyes checked until you are in your 40s or 50s.

Fact: Several asymptomatic yet treatable eye diseases (most notably glaucoma) can begin prior to your 40s.

Myth: Safety goggles are more trouble than they are worth.

Fact: Safety goggles prevent many potentially blinding injuries every year. Keep your goggles handy and use them!

Myth: It is okay to swim while wearing soft contact lenses.

Fact: Potentially blinding eye infections can result from swimming or using a hot tub while wearing contact lenses.

Myth: Children will outgrow “crossed” eyes.

Fact: Children do not outgrow truly crossed eyes. A child whose eyes are misaligned has strabismus and can develop poor vision in one eye (a condition known as amblyopia),



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because the brain “turns off” the misaligned or “lazy” eye. The sooner crossed or misaligned eyes are treated, the less likely the child will have permanently impaired vision.

Myth: A cataract must be “ripe” before it can be removed.

Fact: With modern cataract surgery, a cataract does not have to mature before it is removed. When a cataract interferes with your regular daily activities, you can talk with your ophthalmologist about having it removed.

Myth: Cataracts can be removed with lasers.

Fact: Cataracts cannot be removed with a laser. The cloudy lens must be removed through a surgical incision. However, after cataract surgery, a membrane within the eye may become cloudy. This membrane can be opened with laser surgery.

Myth: Eyes can be transplanted.

Fact: The eye cannot be transplanted. It is connected to the brain by the optic nerve, which cannot be reconnected once it has been severed. However, the cornea can be transplanted.

Myth: All eye-care providers are the same.

Fact: An **ophthalmologist** is a medical doctor (M.D.) or doctor of osteopathy (D.O.), uniquely trained to diagnose and treat all disorders of the eye. An ophthalmologist is qualified to perform surgery, prescribe and adjust eyeglasses and contact lenses, and prescribe medication.

An **optometrist** (O.D.) is not a medical doctor but is specially trained to diagnose eye abnormalities and prescribe, supply, and adjust eyeglasses and contact lenses. In most states, optometrists can use drugs to treat certain eye disorders.

An **optician** fits, supplies, and adjusts eyeglasses and contact lenses. An optician cannot examine the eyes or prescribe eyeglasses or medication.