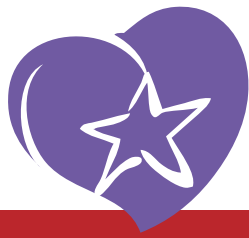


Healthy Habits



HEALTHY HABIT #10 See a brighter future – Take care of your eyes



If you wear corrective lenses, you know the importance of annual eye exams to ensure you have the right prescription.

Did you also know that these exams could detect vision and systemic health problems before you even have symptoms?

The American Optometric Association (AOA) Web site states, “Periodic optometric examinations are an important part of routine preventative health care. Many eye and vision conditions present no obvious symptoms ... Early diagnosis and treatment are important for maintaining good vision and, when possible, preventing permanent vision loss.”

In addition to evaluating your eyes for nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism, your optometrist or ophthalmologist should test for cataracts and glaucoma. It is during these tests that the doctor may also discover early stages of multiple sclerosis, diabetes, high blood pressure and tumors.

As Costco employees, we’re fortunate to have vision benefits that cover one eye exam and one set of prescription lenses each year. There’s no annual deductible and the plan doesn’t require you to see a specific doctor. For more information, you can visit www.costcobenefits.com or call 1-800-284-4882.

As with most health-related issues, it’s up to each of us to take steps toward preventing injury and illness. In addition to annual eye exams, here are a few areas where we can reduce the likelihood of vision problems.

Nutrition

The AOA reports that what we eat can “impact the development of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration, which are the two leading causes of blindness.” A recent clinical trial by the National Eye Institute (NEI) showed that antioxidant vitamins (beta-carotene, vitamins C and E) along with zinc reduced the risk of developing macular degeneration. Similar studies also showed antioxidant vitamins reduced the development and progression of cataracts.

It is recommended that we eat five servings of fruits and vegetables, and two servings of nuts and seeds each day; however, many of us don’t. If you’re among the majority of people who find it difficult to get enough antioxidants from food, vitamin supplements are a great alternative.

Sun protection

The same ultraviolet (UV) radiation that causes skin damage can harm the eyes as well. Studies show that continued exposure to UV rays over time may increase the chance of developing cataracts or causing irreversible damage to the retina.

The good news is that protecting your eyes is simple and can be stylish. Whenever you’re out in the sun, shield your eyes with sunglasses that block both UV-A and UV-B radiation and wear a wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap. Who knows ... you might be mistaken for a movie star in disguise!

Tips for reducing computer eyestrain

Looking at a computer screen for several hours a day can cause eyes to become dry, red and watery, and can lead to headaches or even muscle spasms. Here are tips to reduce the effects of prolonged computer work:

- Place your monitor 20 to 26 inches from your eyes.
- Keep your eyes moist by blinking regularly.
- Ensure your work area is well lit.
- Occasionally look away from your computer.

Test Your “Eye Q”

Check “T” for true or “F” for false

1. You increase your risk of cataracts by reading in weak light.
2. Exercising to control diabetes may help reduce your risk of glaucoma and other eye diseases.
3. Spinach and other green vegetables may protect your eyes from disease.



Answers: 1 – True, 2 – True, 3 – True