

Eye care facts and myths

We have all been told by someone at some time, "You'll hurt your eyes if you do that!" But do you really know what is or is not good for your eyes?

Test yourself with the following true or false statements and see how much you know about your eyes.

"Reading in dim light is harmful to your eyes."

TRUE FALSE

False. Using your eyes in dim light does not damage them. For centuries, all nighttime reading and sewing was done by candlelight or with gas or kerosene lamps. However, good lighting does make reading easier and can prevent eye fatigue.

"Using computers can damage your eyes."

TRUE FALSE

False. Working on computers or video display terminals (VDTs) will not harm your eyes. Often, when using a VDT for long periods of time, just as when reading or doing other close work, you blink less often than normal. This reduced rate of blinking makes your eyes dry, which may lead to the feeling of eyestrain or fatigue.

Try to take regular breaks to look up or across the room. Looking at objects farther away often

relieves the feeling of strain on your eyes. Keep the monitor between 18 to 24 inches from your face and at a slight downward angle. Also consider the use of artificial tears. If your vision blurs or your eyes tire easily, you should have your eyes examined by an ophthalmologist.

"Wearing the wrong kind of eyeglasses damages your eyes."

TRUE FALSE

False. Eyeglasses are devices used to sharpen your vision. Although correct eyeglasses or contacts help you to see clearly, wearing a pair with the wrong lenses, or not wearing glasses at all, will not physically damage your eyes. However, children less than eight years old who need eyeglasses should wear their own prescription to prevent the possibility of developing amblyopia or "lazy eye."

"Children outgrow crossed or misaligned eyes."

TRUE FALSE

False. Children do not outgrow crossed eyes. A child whose eyes are misaligned may develop poor vision in one eye because the brain will "turn off" or ignore the image from the misaligned or lazy eye. The unused or misaligned eye will not develop good vision unless it is forced to work, usually by patching the stronger eye.



"A lazy eye" is often treated by patching the strong eye, forcing the weaker eye to work. Children who appear to have misaligned eyes should be examined by an ophthalmologist. In general, the earlier misaligned eyes are treated, the better. Treatment may include patching, eyeglasses, eyedrops, surgery, or a combination of these methods.

"Learning disabilities are caused by eye problems."

TRUE FALSE

False. Difficulties with reading, mathematics, and other learning problems in children are often referred to as learning disabilities. There is no strong evidence that vision problems cause learning disabilities or that eye exercises cure learning problems.

Children with learning difficulties often need help from teachers and people with special training. Before such treatment begins, it is important for the child to have a complete medical eye examination to make certain he or she is seeing as well as possible.

"Sitting close to the television can damage children's eyes."

TRUE FALSE

False. Children can focus at close distance without eyestrain better than adults. They often develop the habit of holding reading materials close to their eyes or sitting right in front of the television.

There is no evidence that this damages their eyes, and the habit usually diminishes as children grow older. Children with nearsightedness (myopia) sometimes sit close to the television in order to see the images more clearly.

"Eating carrots improves your vision."

TRUE FALSE

False. Carrots are rich in vitamin A, which is essential for sight, but many other foods also contain this vitamin. A well-balanced diet, with or without carrots, provides all the vitamin A necessary for good vision.

"People with weak eyes should avoid reading fine print."

TRUE FALSE

False. It is said that people with weak eyes or people who wear glasses will "wear out" their eyes sooner if they read fine print or do a lot of detail work.

(over)

The American Academy of Ophthalmology is an organization of 25,000 ophthalmologists (Eye M.D.s) dedicated to preserving eye health and sight.

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The concept of the eye as a muscle is incorrect. The eye more closely resembles a camera. A camera will not wear out sooner just because it is used to photograph intricate detail. You can use your eyes without fear of wearing them out.

"Wearing eyeglasses will cause you to become dependent on them."

TRUE FALSE

False. Eyeglasses are used to correct blurry vision. Since clear vision with eyeglasses is preferable to uncorrected vision, you may find that you want to wear your eyeglasses more often. Although it may feel as if you are becoming dependent on your eyeglasses, you are actually just getting used to seeing clearly.

"Older people who gain 'second sight' may be developing cataracts."

TRUE FALSE

True. Older individuals who wear reading eyeglasses sometimes find themselves able to read without their eyeglasses and think their eyesight is improving.

The truth is they are becoming more nearsighted, which can be a sign of early cataract development.

"A cataract must be 'ripe' before it is removed."

TRUE FALSE

False. With older surgical techniques, it was thought to be safer to remove a cataract when it was "ripe." With today's modern surgical procedures, a cataract can be removed whenever it begins to interfere with a person's lifestyle.

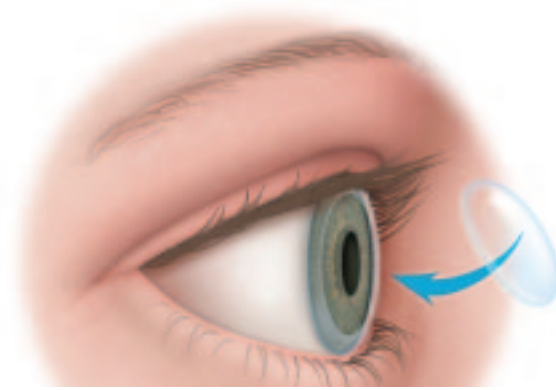
If you are unable to see well enough to do the things you like or need to do, you should consider cataract surgery. Surgery is the only way to remove a cataract.

"Contact lenses can prevent nearsightedness from getting worse."

TRUE FALSE

False. Some people have been led to believe that wearing contact lenses will permanently correct nearsightedness so that eventually they won't need either contacts or eyeglasses.

There is no evidence that wearing contact lenses produces a permanent improvement in vision or prevents nearsightedness from getting worse.



...real transplant surgery, a donor cornea (the clear, front part of the eye) replaces a damaged cornea.

"Corneas can be replaced."

TRUE FALSE

False. Medical science has no way to transplant whole eyes. Our eyes are connected to the brain by the optic nerve.

Much like a fiber optic cable, the optic nerve is made up of more than one million tiny nerve fibers. This nerve cannot be reconnected once it has been severed. Because of this, the eye is never removed from its socket during surgery.

The cornea, the clear front part of the eye, has been successfully transplanted for many years. Corneal transplant is sometimes confused with an eye transplant.

"All 'eye doctors' are the same."

TRUE FALSE

False. An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor (M.D. or D.O.) with special training to diagnose and treat all diseases of the eye.

To become an ophthalmologist requires a minimum of eight years of medical school and hospital training after college. An ophthalmologist is qualified to provide all aspects of eye care, including cataract, laser, and other eye surgery.

Optometrists (O.D.) and opticians are other types of eye care professionals. They are trained and licensed to provide some aspects of eye care, but they are not medical doctors and have not attended medical school and residency training. In most states, they cannot prescribe all medications or perform surgery.

Notes

Eye Care Facts and Myths
A Closer Look

