

Looking Good! Your Way to Healthy Vision!



Early Intervention Program
Nova Scotia Teacher Union

This information has been adapted from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) website resources. Check out the CNIB website at www.cnib.ca

The CNIB recommends the following 10 simple steps for preventing vision loss:

Eye Facts:

- The average person blinks about 12 times a minute
- About half of our brain is involved in the seeing process.
- Only 1/6th of your eyeball is exposed to the outside world.
- Colour blindness is 10 times more common in males than females
- Your eyelashes have an average life span of 5 months

1. Have your eyes examined regularly by an eye-care professional, and don't ignore changes in your vision.

There is no single recommended frequency for eye exams. The ideal frequency varies from person to person, based on your risk factors. You have a higher risk of developing vision loss if you:

- Are over 50
- Have a family history of eye disease, or an existing eye condition
- Have light-colored eyes and skin
- Are diabetic
- Are overweight or in poor physical health
- Smoke cigarettes

If you don't think you have risk factors, it doesn't mean you are off the hook for eye exams. People of any age, and in perfectly good health, develop eye disease too. Look at it this way: it certainly can't hurt if you err on the side of going more frequently.

2. Quit smoking for your eyes.

People who smoke are three to four times more likely to develop Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD), which is the number one cause of significant vision loss in people over 50 in Canada. Quitting now can reduce the risk.





Did You Know?

Exercise can benefit your eyes over time.

3. Get healthy and exercise.

Keep active: excess weight, a sedentary lifestyle and high blood pressure are all risk factors for AMD and diabetic retinopathy. Exercise can benefit your eyes over time.

- ✓ Try a brisk walk or wheel to work, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or a bike ride with the kids
- ✓ Exercise helps to strengthen your cardiovascular and respiratory systems, meaning the circulation of blood through your heart and blood vessels. Exercising lowers the buildup of fatty deposits, or plaques, in your arteries, helping the blood to flow more smoothly and efficiently through them. Your eyes are full of tiny blood vessels that supply oxygen and nutrients to the tissues, and exercise may help “unclog the pipes” to deliver the goods more effectively and keep the eyes healthier
- ✓ While studies show that aerobic exercise can lower intraocular pressure, other forms of exercise can increase intraocular pressure. So if you're a glaucoma patient, it's especially important to check with your doctor before making any lifestyle changes. An additional note of caution here, weightlifting in particular has been linked to a rise in intraocular pressure (the pressure inside your eyeball). If you are at risk for glaucoma, consult with your eye care professional before beginning a weightlifting program. For more information on this topic check out: <http://www.cnib.ca/en/about/Publications/newsletters/Insight/052007/Pages/vision-health-weightlifting.aspx>.

4. Protect your eyes from sunlight.



Exposure to sunlight is associated with a higher risk of developing AMD and cataracts. Wear a hat with a brim, and choose sunglasses that provide at least 98 per cent protection from ultraviolet (UV) rays: check the vendor tag for the UV rating before you buy. Your eyes need protection from the sun all year round. Just as in the summer, the two main risks of sun exposure are damage from UV rays and discomfort caused by glare.

Glare is nearly always present during daylight hours, whether the sun is shining or not. Bright reflections off shiny surfaces like snow, vehicles or buildings can subject the eyes to much

more light than you actually need to see. This causes irritation and discomfort as your pupils contract, your eyelids narrow and the muscles around your eyes constrict as you squint to see properly.

A far more serious problem, however, is the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays, which are intensified when they are reflected. In the short term, exposure can cause a painful, temporary condition called photokeratitis, which is literally sunburn on the surface of your eyeball. Over the long-term exposure to UV rays increases your risk of developing two more serious conditions: cataracts, a clouding of the lens that causes blurred vision and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

5. Wear eye protection.

When playing sports or working with power tools, protect your eyes with Canadian Standards Association-approved safety glasses or goggles. You don't need a prescription for them, and most hardware and sporting-goods stores carry a good selection.

6. Eat healthy and consider vitamin supplements.

A healthy diet, particularly a diet rich in antioxidants and vitamins A, C and E, can also be beneficial for your eyes. In 2001, the National Eye Institute released the results of its AREDS (Age-Related Eye Disease Study) which showed that high-dose antioxidant vitamins such as A, C and E, plus the minerals copper and zinc, reduced the risk of progression to advanced

age-related macular degeneration (AMD) by 25 per cent, and the risk of moderate vision loss by 19 per cent. Vitamins C and E may also help reduce the risk of developing cataracts. These three vitamins can be found naturally in brightly-coloured fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, peas, oranges, kiwis, dried apricots, tomatoes and leafy greens, as well as in nuts, seeds, dairy products and eggs. It's important to note here that it would be almost impossible to eat

enough fruits and vegetables to deliver the amount recommended in the AREDS study. In addition, some over-the-counter vitamins – especially vitamin A - can be toxic in large doses. If you have AMD and are interested in vitamin supplements, consult your doctor to determine the dosage that is appropriate for you.

For more information check out:

<http://www.cnib.ca/en/your-eyes/eye-care/nutrients/a-z/>

Top 5 antioxidant rich foods:

- Red Beans
- Blueberries
- Cranberries
- Artichokes
- Blackberries



7. Prevent diabetes

Reduce your risk of many kinds of vision loss. Most people with diabetes are at a high risk of developing diabetic retinopathy and other vision problems.

8. Managing diabetes (if you already have it)

Significantly lower your risk of diabetic retinopathy. It's particularly crucial if you have Type 1 diabetes to control your blood pressure, sugar and lipid (fat) levels.



Did You Know?

Diabetes is now the leading cause of blindness in Canada

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9. Drinking moderately

Lower the risk of developing cataracts, since heavy drinking of alcoholic beverages is a known risk factor.

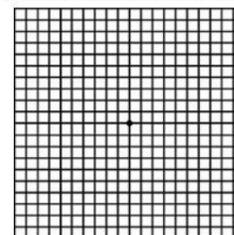
10. Using an Amsler Grid

Be more likely to catch wet AMD in the early stages, when it's much easier to treat. Wet AMD causes significant vision loss, usually very quickly. The Amsler Grid – a test you can easily do at home – is highly recommended if you are over 50, have a family history of AMD or have dry AMD (which often progresses to wet AMD).

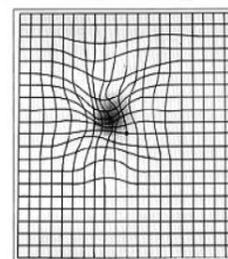
Test Instructions

1. Make sure you are in a well lit area, and hold or post the chart at eye level and at a comfortable distance. You may find it convenient to attach the grid to a wall at and stand 12-14" away.
2. If you wear glasses, keep them on. If you wear bifocals, use the reading portion of the lens.
3. Cover one eye and look at the centre dot. Note the lines and squares appear and whether or not there are any distortions or breaks in the grid. Also note if the centre dot, a part of the dot, or any of the lines disappear. Blurred or double images might not necessarily be abnormal. The use of progressive, lineless bifocals may introduce some distortion in the grid.
4. Test the other eye in the same way.

This is a normal Amsler Grid:



This is how it might look if you had AMD:



The whole process may take only 10 seconds. Check the grid daily, or as often as recommended by your eye care professional.

Download a full size version of the chart at the CNIB website.