

EYE-Q

by R. Thomas Barowsky, MD

Eye Health is Everyone's Concern

January has been designated National Eye Healthcare Month by the National Institute's National Eye Institute. It is a chance for us to talk about how we can keep our eyes healthy and our vision clear going into the New Year.

There are many myths about vision and protecting our eyes and our sight. So this week let's dispel some of the more popular myths about our eyes and vision and present a few examples to reinforce some simple facts. So sit back, reflect on the New Year's resolutions you made on Saturday and enjoy these little pearls.

Eating Carrots Will Improve Your Sight

Fact: Carrots are high in vitamin A, a nutrient essential for good vision. Eating carrots will provide you with the small amount of vitamin A needed for good vision, but vitamin A isn't limited to rabbit food; it can also be found in milk, cheese, egg yolk and liver.

Sitting Too Close to the TV Will Damage Your Vision

Fiction: Sitting closer than necessary to the television may give you a headache, but it will not damage your vision.

Reading in the Dark Will Weaken Your Eyesight

Fiction: As with sitting too close to the television, you may get a headache from reading in the dark, but it will not weaken your sight.

Using Glasses or Contacts Will Weaken My Eyesight, and My Eyes Will Eventually Become Dependent On Them

Fiction: Your eyes will not grow weaker as a result of using corrective lenses. Your prescription may change over time due to aging or the presence of disease, but it is not because of your current prescription.

Children with Crossed Eyes Can Be Treated

Fact: Children are not able to outgrow most forms of strabismus on their own, but with help, it can be more easily corrected at a younger age. That's why it is important for your child to have an eye exam early, first when they are infants and then again by age two.

There's Nothing You Can Do to Prevent Vision Loss

Fiction: At the very first signs of vision loss, such as blurred vision or flashes of light, you should see your doctor. If detected early enough, depending on the cause, there are treatments that can correct, stop, or slow down the loss of vision.

Using a Nightlight in Your Child's Room Will Contribute to Nearsightedness

Fiction: It has been thought that using a nightlight in your child's bedroom may contribute to nearsightedness, however there is not enough evidence to support this claim. Keeping a nightlight on in your baby's room may actually help them learn to focus and develop important eye coordination skills when they are awake.

Looking Straight at the Sun Will Damage Your Sight

Fact: Looking at the sun may not only cause headache and distort your vision temporarily, but it can also cause permanent eye damage. Any exposure to sunlight adds to the cumulative effects of ultraviolet radiation on your eyes. UV exposure has been linked to eye disorders such as cataract formation, macular degeneration, solar retinitis, and corneal dystrophies.

Using Artificial Sweeteners Will Make Your Eyes More Sensitive to Light

Fact: If you use artificial sweeteners, like cyclamates, your eyes may be more sensitive to light. There are other factors that will make your eyes more sensitive to light as well. They include antibiotics, oral contraceptives, hypertension medications, diuretics, and diabetic medications.

Flaxseed oil is good for my eyes

Fact: Flaxseed oil is high in antioxidants which are thought to play a vital role in slowing down the aging process. In addition to aiding in tear film production, these chemicals may play a role in slowing macular degeneration and cataract formation. Flaxseed oil has also been found to reduce cholesterol and protect the heart from the ravages of aging. I recommend 4000mg per day divided into two or more doses. Before starting your flaxseed oil regimen be sure to check with your family doctor to ensure that it doesn't interfere with other medications you may be taking.

If you have questions about your eye health e-mail Dr. Barowsky at doctom@tdkj.com and we'll try to answer your questions here at Eye-Q.