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The Eye Institute

EYESIGHT

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Managing Dry Eye

Dry eye occurs when the eye does not produce tears properly or when the tears are not the correct consistency and evaporate too quickly. For some people, it feels like a speck of sand in the eye, or stinging or burning that does not go away. For others, dry eye can become a painful chronic and progressive condition that leads to blurred vision or even vision loss if it goes untreated due to inflammation that can cause ulcers or scars on the cornea.

According to the National Eye Institute (NEI), dry eye is more common in people 50 and older. Nearly 5 million Americans who are 50 or older experience severe symptoms of dry eye, and about 20 million have less severe symptoms. The condition is twice as prevalent among women as it is among men.

Dry Eye Causes

People tend to make fewer tears as they get older due to hormonal changes. Though men and women can get dry eye, it is more common in women, especially those who have gone through menopause.

Other causes of dry eye include:

- Certain diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogren's syndrome, thyroid disease, and lupus.
- Being in smoke, wind or a very dry climate.
- Looking at a computer screen for a long time, reading and other activities that reduce blinking.
- Using contact lenses for a long time.
- Having refractive eye surgery, such as LASIK.
- Taking certain medicines.

Dry Eye Prevention Tips

- Take frequent breaks when staring at computer or TV screens.
- Avoid smoke.
- Stay away from very warm rooms. In the winter, add moisture to the air with a humidifier. Or put a pan of water near your heater or radiator.
- Protect your eyes from drying wind by wearing wrap-around glasses outside.
- Use artificial tear ointment or thick eye drops just before you go to bed.

For most people with occasional or mild dry eye symptoms, it's enough to regularly use over-the-counter eye drops (artificial tears). If your symptoms are persistent and more serious, you have other options.

Untreated dry eye syndrome can cause damage to the cornea, the front surface of the eye. Early diagnosis and treatment of the condition can avoid damaging the cornea and improve the quality of vision.

The Eye Institute's Dry Eye Clinic focuses on the diagnosis and management of dry eye syndrome. Optometrists provide comprehensive dry eye evaluations, using the latest technology, and recommend thorough, customized therapy plans for each patient.

If you are experiencing symptoms of dry eye, contact The Eye Institute's dry eye experts at 215.276.6111 to schedule an appointment.



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Myopia in Children

Myopia, or nearsightedness, is a refractive error, which means the eye does not bend or refract light properly to see images clearly. In myopia, close objects look clear but distant objects appear blurred. It is an eye focusing disorder, not an eye disease.

Myopia is often discovered in children when they are between ages eight and 12 years old. During the teenage years, when the body grows rapidly, myopia may become worse. The symptoms often continue until age 20 or longer if untreated.

Recent studies show the prevalence of myopia rising at an alarming rate. NEI warns that by 2020, 39 million Americans will be nearsighted, and that the figure will grow to 44.5 million by 2050. In all age groups, an estimated one-third of the population has myopia, however, the incidence rate is as high as 90% in some parts of East Asia.

Without getting treatment for myopia, your child has a higher chance of developing serious eye problems when they're older, such as cataracts, retinal detachment and macular degeneration.

Signs of myopia in children include:

- Holding books, tablets, or homework close to the face.
- Sitting too close to the TV.
- Squinting or closing one eye to read.
- Frequent headaches.
- Rubbing eyes.
- Worsening school or athletic performance, or withdrawal from those activities could indicate a vision problem.

Studies conducted over recent years have suggested a few reasons to explain the increase in myopia among children.

- Heredity and a person's ethnicity and family background can increase the risk.
- Children are interacting with more types of technology more often. This includes electronic games, laptops, computers, tablets, smartphones and other handheld technology. As technology has improved, it has become more personal and is being used at closer distances.
- Decrease in outdoor time combined with access to technology. Time spent outdoors allows a child's eyes to benefit from improved light and the ability to focus at a distance. Studies also show outdoor activities suppress the development of myopia, so encourage your child to spend time outdoors and spend time away from their computer, tablets, phones and TV screens.

The Myopic Clinic at The Eye Institute offers several different customized treatment options to prevent the onset or reduce the progression of myopia in pediatric patients specifically. The child's eyes will be evaluated to review any possible myopia progression present during the examination.

Optometrists will look at the amount of myopia (refraction) in the child's eyes and measure the length of their eye. After the evaluation, treatment options will be discussed based on each individual child's current needs.

Call The Eye Institute at 215.276.6111 to schedule an appointment at the Myopic Clinic.



Cataracts: Types, Causes and Risk Factors

By 2050, the number of people in the U.S. with cataracts is expected to double from 24.4 million to about 50 million (NEI). By age 80, most people either have cataracts or have had cataract surgery.

There are different types of cataracts:

- Age-related cataracts. The majority of cataracts are related to aging.
- Congenital cataracts. Some babies are born with cataracts. Some children develop them in childhood, often in both eyes. Some congenital cataracts do not affect eyesight, but others do and need to be removed.
- Secondary cataracts. Secondary cataracts usually happen because of another disease in the body (such as diabetes). Secondary cataracts have also been linked to steroid use.
- Traumatic cataracts. An injury to one or both eyes may cause you to develop a traumatic cataract. This can happen either right after the accident or several years later.

Doctors and researchers don't know exactly what causes some people to get cataracts, but there are risk factors that can make cataracts form faster, including:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Spending too much time in the sun without sunglasses
- Diabetes
- A serious eye injury
- Eye surgery to treat glaucoma or another eye condition
- Taking steroids for an extended time
- Radiation treatment for cancer or other diseases

You might not have any symptoms

at first, when cataracts are mild. But as cataracts grow, they can cause changes in your vision. Symptoms include:

- Cloudy or blurry vision
- Colors look faded
- You can't see well at night
- Lamps, sunlight, or headlights seem too bright
- You see a halo around lights
- You see double (this sometimes goes away as the cataract gets bigger)
- You have to change the prescription of your glasses often

The symptoms of early cataracts may be improved with new glasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses, or magnifying lenses. A cataract needs to be removed only when vision loss interferes with your everyday activities, such as driving, reading, or watching TV.

You and your eye care professional can make this decision together. Once you understand the benefits and risks of surgery, you can make an informed decision about whether cataract surgery is right for you.

During cataract surgery, the doctor removes the clouded lens and replaces it with a new, artificial lens. According to the American Optometric Association, cataract surgery is one of the safest and most effective types of surgeries in the U.S. and approximately 90 percent of patients report better vision after. Cataract surgery is one of the most common operations across the country.

Remember these tips:

- Tell your optometrist if cataracts are getting in the way of your everyday activities
- See your optometrist for annual eye exams
- Ask your doctor about the benefits and risks of cataract surgery
- Encourage family members to get checked for cataracts, since they can run in families

As with most eye conditions, early intervention is key. A comprehensive eye exam is the best way to detect the development of cataracts. Contact The Eye Institute (TEI) to make an appointment at one of our practice locations.



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The Eye Institute (Oak Lane)
1200 West Godfrey Avenue
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The Eye Institute (Chestnut Hill)
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At Salus University's health facilities The Eye Institute, Pennsylvania Ear Institute and Speech-Language Institute compassionate doctors, clinicians and support staff have dedicated their lives to improving the health and well-being of our community. They provide highly specialized vision, hearing and balance, and speech-language pathology services all in an effort to improve the quality of life for patients and clients.

If you have a caregiver who has made a meaningful impact on your life, please consider sending them a note of gratitude and making a charitable gift to the clinic in his or her honor. Although the amount of your contribution remains confidential, your Healthcare Hero will be notified of your honorary gift and he or she will be given special recognition.



Honor your Healthcare Hero

Your gift not only demonstrates deep gratitude for the care you received, but it will play a critical role in enhancing access to care, advancing innovation and improving the patient and client experience in our community.

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