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Looking after your eyes gets more important as the years go by, but it's easy to neglect them when you don't notice big changes. Occasional dry eyes, itchy eyelids or forehead ache might not seem a big deal, but irritants like these are sometimes symptoms of eye diseases or conditions.

Those always-recommended ideals of eating well and exercising can help to prevent eye problems. And getting yourself to your local optometrist for a check-up is easy to put off, but essential.

Our wise guidance from optometrist and clinical expert Dr Josie Forte, eyewear image consultant and optometrist Eva Davé and author Dr Johanna Seddon will power up your knowledge about common conditions, their symptoms and what treatments are available. For starters, get your eyes tested if you haven't done so recently.

"It's extremely important to have regular eye tests. Once every two years is ample, unless otherwise advised by your optometrist," Dr Forte advises. "The key to safe diagnosis is catching symptoms before they inflict sight loss.

"We look for indicators of cataracts, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and diabetes or high blood pressure."

Seeing for life

IN THIS 8-PAGE SPECIAL, OUR EXPERTS LOOK AT EYE PROBLEMS, THEIR TREATMENT AND PREVENTION. ALONG WITH SOUND DIET ADVICE AND SPECS-WEARING CHIC, IT'S A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO YOUR PRECIOUS SIGHT.

By MAIRI MULHERN

Glaucoma

This inflicts damage on the optic nerve that connects your eyes to your brain, causing fluid build-up that leads to dangerous pressure on the inside — known as intraocular pressure. Glaucoma develops more frequently as we get older, and can cause permanent peripheral sight loss. It takes years to develop, however, so the earlier it is picked up, the better the prognosis.

SYMPTOMS

"Glaucoma is sometimes called the silent thief of sight because it can develop over years with very few symptoms," Dr Forte explains. "You can spot initial stages in persistent blurred vision and seeing rainbow-coloured circles around bright lights. You might experience severe eye pain, and also look out for:

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Sudden arrival of visual disturbance.
- Reddening of the eye and eyelids.

"If you have these symptoms you should seek specialist help as soon as you possibly can."

TREATMENTS

According to Dr Forte, "There is no cure for glaucoma, but it can be treated effectively with daily eye drops, laser treatment or an operation. Medication is by far the most common form of treatment for glaucoma, but it all depends on the severity of the disease.

"Trabeculoplasty is a laser treatment designed specifically for this condition — it lowers the pressure in the eye and slows progression. Laser Peripheral Iridotomy (LPI) is another specialised laser procedure that creates a small hole in the iris to help prevent fluid build-up."

Dr Forte emphasises, "All of these measures can potentially prevent further vision loss and in some people, can even improve the quality of life by reducing the need for regular eye drops."

People over 40 who have a close family member with glaucoma are entitled to a free yearly eye test — it's well worth making time for it.



Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

AMD is the most common cause of sight loss in the developed world and affects around 600,000 people in the UK. You can download an Amsler Grid to test regularly at home for tell-tale signs of the condition — but don't miss those all-important eye tests.

Optometrist Eva Davé says that there are two types we should be aware of.

"Dry AMD is blurred or reduced central vision due to thinning of the macula. It usually progresses slowly, so many cases remain mild.

"Wet AMD is a chronic eye disorder that results in blind spots caused by abnormal vessels that leak fluid or blood into the back of the eye. It is more severe and can happen suddenly."

Scientists have discovered a link between a protein and the condition, and they hope it will lead to earlier treatment.

In the meantime, look out for:

SYMPTOMS

- Spots or smudges in your vision
- Objects changing shape, like a door frame seeming wobbly
- Words sometimes disappearing when you're reading

In everyday life, Eva says, "People with AMD will experience loss of central vision, leaving black spots and hazy areas, impacting things like seeing the TV clearly or identifying road signs."

TREATMENTS

"As yet, there is no specific treatment for dry AMD," Eva says. "Wet AMD can be treated with eye injections to reabsorb the fluids that are causing distortion of sight."

Occasionally, a treatment called photodynamic therapy is used.

"Eating a wide variety of fruit and vegetables may also help reduce progression," adds Eva. »

Diabetic-induced retinopathy

Diabetes can sometimes cause tiny blood vessels at the back of the eye to become blocked; they may leak or grow incorrectly, damaging the retina, causing a condition known as diabetic retinopathy. “This can range from mild, which causes no loss of vision, to severe, which can lead to sight loss if untreated,” Eva explains.

SYMPTOMS

For those with diabetes, symptoms often affect both eyes at once:

- Vision coming and going throughout the day.
- Impaired colour recognition.
- Dark or empty areas in sight.

TREATMENTS

“If diagnosed, you’ll likely be treated with a laser that seals off leaky blood vessels. If the macula is affected, then injections will go into the eye to reabsorb the blood or fluid, helping to improve vision,” says Dr Forte.

“To avoid diabetic-induced retinopathy, maintain a healthy lifestyle, monitor your weight and avoid smoking.” She recommends seeing your doctor for an exam with dilation. “This is where the pupil is purposely expanded to allow the full view of the retina and optic nerves. It’s essential, even if your vision seems fine. It can tell us a lot.”



Temporal arteritis (TA)

TA is rare in people under 50. It is a potentially life-threatening condition that causes a swelling at the side of the head. Untreated, it can result in a lack of blood flow to the eyes, face and brain. This can lead to blindness, aortic aneurysm and/or stroke. It’s important to get symptoms checked and treated urgently.

SYMPTOMS

These depend on which arteries are affected, but always be wary of:

- Severe pain in one or both temples.
 - Bulging or enlarged arteries at the side of your head.
- When the condition progresses, symptoms tend to spread over the rest of your head:
- Jaw pain when talking and eating.
 - Tender scalp — especially when brushing hair or wearing glasses.
 - Double vision or loss of vision in both eyes.

TREATMENTS

For TA, Eva explains, “Corticosteroid medications are used to relieve symptoms within a few days, but unfortunately it’s common to suffer relapses and you will need frequent monitoring. In this situation, if you’re experiencing symptoms, visit your GP and ask about prednisolone, a steroid normally prescribed to avoid sight loss.”

If symptoms worsen further, the NHS provides:

- General blood tests in health centres or local hospitals.
- Referral to an ophthalmologist for an ultrasound scan.
- A biopsy under local anaesthetic — surgeons will take a small sample of the temporal artery and test for TA.

The key to diagnosis is catching symptoms early. If you have urgent concerns, call 111 for instant advice.



Dry eye disease (DED)

DED is inflammation that prevents the production of tears. Experts at the North American Menopause Society say that our post-menopausal hormones increase the likelihood of developing this condition. The National Library of Medicine outlines that our lowered levels of oestrogen and the hormone oestradiol are what makes us twice as likely to develop DED as men over the age of 65.

SYMPTOMS

“Though painful and irritating, this condition does come with methods of quick relief,” Eva explains. “If you wear contact lenses, smoke or drink alcohol excessively you are more likely to experience dry eye disease symptoms.” These include:

- Gritty or irritated feeling under the eyelid.
- Blurry vision.
- Seeping mucus around the eyes.

TREATMENTS

You can find out about different kinds of eye drops in your local pharmacy and also order online — Hycosan Eye Drops, Blink Contacts and Everclear Eye Drops are all worth a try. Visiondirect.co.uk sell these and provide quick advice from eye experts via their live chat service. If lubricating eye drops don’t feel effective, you can try some alternative treatments:

- Use a humidifier or face steamer.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat plenty of oily fish or take omega 3 fish oil supplements.
- Protect your eyes from the sun, even when it isn’t particularly bright. Invest in a good pair of sunglasses — look for the UV400, CE or British Standard Mark.

Cataracts

The NHS describes cataracts as a small transparent disc that appears inside your eye. It gradually becomes clouded before inflicting permanent blindness. The only cure is surgery and while being anaesthetised sounds daunting, it is a routine procedure — nearly 330,000 cataract surgeries are performed successfully each year in England alone.

SYMPTOMS

- Seeing halos around lights at night.
- Fading or yellowing of colour.
- Sometimes double vision in one eye.

TREATMENTS

“The only cure for a cataract is a 30 to 45-minute surgical procedure known as phacoemulsification,” says Dr Forte.

“Phacoemulsification involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial one that cannot cloud over in the same way. This is sometimes also referred to as Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE). It is considered only as an option for older people who have an extremely high lens prescription or are in later stages of cataracts.”



“AN EYE EXAM LED TO THE DISCOVERY OF A RARE TUMOUR. EYE TESTS ARE VITAL.”

Susan Thomas needed to find

out why there was so much pain in her eye.

“When I visited my optometrist, Mohammed Hayat, at Specsavers Selby, it was clear that the optic nerve behind my left eye was swollen.

“He referred me to an ophthalmology specialist within two days. I took an MRI scan and received a phone call at work explaining that I needed to go back to see the lead consultant urgently.

“When I attended the appointment, they explained that I had a 27mm intraconal tumour behind my left eye, which could possibly be cancerous. Surgery was my only option, so I took a deep breath and got on with it. The surgeons got the whole tumour — I can’t explain my relief.

“What I had is rare, but I recommend going for regular eye exams as you are not only checking your sight but the health of your eyes, too.

“If I’d left it any longer, it could have been too late to treat successfully.” »

OMEGA-3, LUTEIN, ZINC AND VITAMIN C ARE KEY IN A DIET FOR EYE HEALTH.



Exercise your eyes

Exercises can reduce double vision and help prevent lazy eye. Start with the flexing technique — face forward with eyes straight ahead; look up without moving your head, bring your eyes back to the middle and then look down. Repeat ten times. The figure of eight is easy, too — stare at a blank wall and trace a large sideways figure of eight with your eyes. Continue without moving your head for one minute, then reverse.



Eye teasers

Useful apps like *Eye Check* by Boots test your colour perception, astigmatism and visual acuity. *Vision Test* by 3-Sided Cube uses mini challenges to improve your focus. These must not be used as diagnostic tools or replacements for medical check-ups.



The 20-20-20 rule

Californian optometrist Jeffrey Anshel designed the 20-20-20 rule to relieve eye strain at work. Watch something 20 feet away from you for 20 seconds and repeat every 20 minutes. This will rest your eyes from screens and is the perfect excuse for a little workplace daydream.

Daily DUTIES

HELPFUL HACKS FOR RESILIENT EYES.

Speedy snacks

3-MINUTE HUMMUS

Chickpeas provide zinc, lemons give vitamin C and the antioxidants in fresh garlic help the eye lens. Ideal with a handful of carrot sticks for your daily dose of vitamin A.

■ Put 850g of canned chickpeas in an electric mixer with 1/3 of the can of water and 100g tahini.

■ Add 55g olive oil, the juice of 2 lemons, 2 garlic cloves, 1tsp of cumin and ½tsp salt. Blend until smooth and creamy.

BLUEBERRY AND SOYA COCONUT GRANOLA

Antioxidants in blueberries help the cornea, calcium in soya yogurt helps stave off age-related degeneration and honey has essential anti-inflammatory properties.

■ Layer 32g Alpro soya coconut yogurt under 15 blueberries. Spoon on 32g of Lizi's Low Sugar Granola and trickle on 1tsp all-natural honey for extra sweetness.



Eat right for your sight

GET THE RIGHT VITAMINS, ANTIOXIDANTS AND OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS INTO YOUR MEALS WITH DR JOHANNA SEDDON'S NUTRITIONAL ADVICE.



GLAUCOMA

Vitamin A protects the optic nerve by transporting essential nutrients from your liver to cornea. Carrots, peaches and mature cheeses maintain healthy levels and encourage movement between organs. Vegan? Use peppers and butternut squash instead of cheese.



AMD

Find your NHS-recommended 7mg of zinc in five oysters, or a fillet of pork. For plant-based diets, the Office of Dietary Supplements recommends kidney beans, chickpeas and garden peas.



PLATINUM EXPERT Dr Johanna Seddon

The author of *Eat Right For Your Sight* and director of Tufts University's Medical Centre, Dr Seddon has published 15 papers on her discoveries in AMD treatment. She explains the nutrients we need to help prevent disease.



CATARACTS

10mg lutein and 2mg zeaxanthin per day helps reduce the risk of cataracts by creating a filter that protects the retina from harsh light. Wilted spinach is high in lutein while salmon, eggs and broccoli are rich in zeaxanthin — the perfect ingredients for an eye-healthy dinner.



DRY EYE DISEASE

One salmon fillet served with 100g of turnip tops and Swiss chard will provide your daily recommendation of omega 3 — a fatty acid that keeps eyes lubricated.

Start to shop, cook and eat like the Mediterraneans. Enjoy fish twice a week and use fruit, leafy vegetables, nuts, legumes and grains to create meals that are nutritious and tasty. A higher intake of vitamins D and B will help reduce your risk of developing advanced stages of age-related disease. Soon you'll discover what you really enjoy and won't think twice about making sure the food you're eating is right for your sight.



Laser eye surgery is the most **commonly performed surgical** procedure in the world, with over **35 million patients** treated since 1987.

Of the **350,000** people registered as partially sighted in the UK, **two-thirds** are women.



The NHS say **laser surgery** is best suited to **people with high prescriptions** or **later in life**.

In the UK, roughly **120,000** patients undergo **laser eye surgery every year**.



Researchers followed **4,000 men and women** for 15 years and found that those who **exercised regularly** were **70% less likely** to develop **wet AMD**.

£28 billion is spent yearly on **eye health** and **sight loss treatments** in the UK.



1 in 9 people over the **age of 60** will **develop varying levels of sight loss** in their life.

Every **6 minutes** someone in the UK is told **they are going blind**.



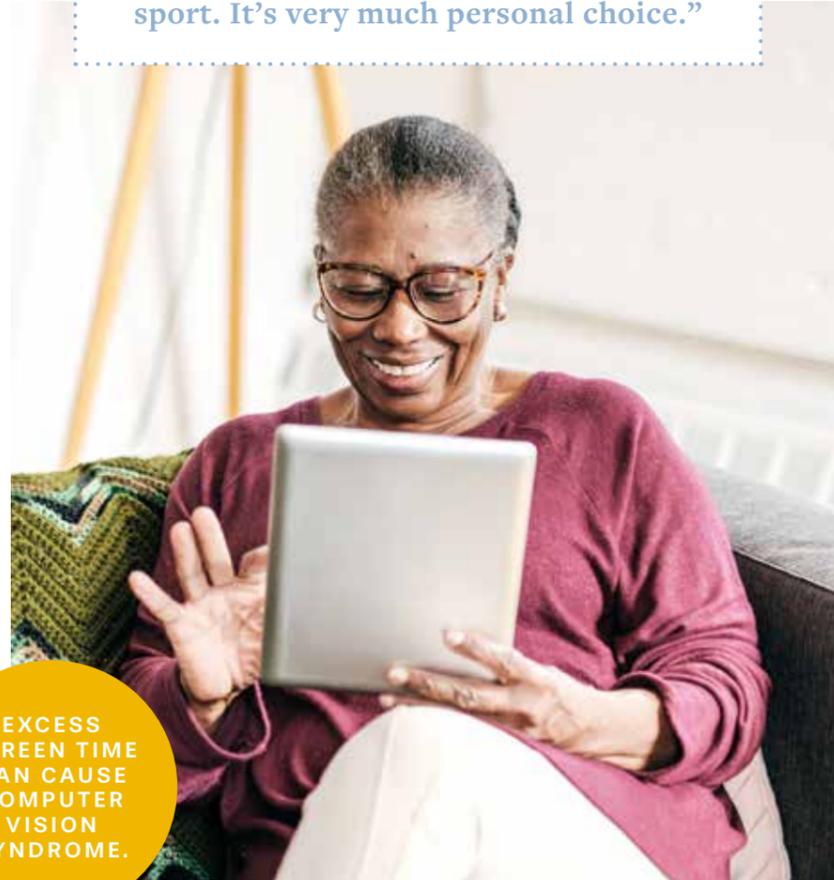
“WAS MY EARLY CATARACT SURGERY LIFE-CHANGING? DEFINITELY.”

Tina Lipfriend initially wanted laser eye surgery to replace her glasses. She ended up needing early cataract operations in both eyes, but loves the results.

“I elected to have surgery because I didn’t want to wear glasses all time. The operation was done under a local anaesthetic; it took about an hour and I was in and out of hospital the same day.

“Was my surgery life-changing? Definitely — no need for glasses while driving, that was a huge benefit. I’m just delighted with the results. I wholeheartedly recommend the procedure to other women. The results are instant and I only wear glasses for reading now, which I much prefer.”

CONTACT LENSES OR GLASSES?
 “Spectacles require very little maintenance and for squeamish people, don’t require any eye-touching,” says Dr Forte. “For people with heavier spectacle prescriptions, contact lenses can offer greater comfort, improved aesthetics and a better visual outcome. They can be useful if you play a lot of sport. It’s very much personal choice.”



EXCESS SCREEN TIME CAN CAUSE COMPUTER VISION SYNDROME.

1 in 500 people notice sight loss after lens replacement surgery.

Considering surgery?

Laser eye surgery, or laser vision correction, involves using lasers to reshape the front surface (cornea) of your eyes so that you can focus better. It can correct short-sightedness, long-sightedness and astigmatism.

Most people experience side effects in weeks or months post-surgery, say the NHS. Gritty eyes and discomfort should subside within three to six months and if you have red blotches on your eyes, these fade away in approximately four weeks.

Cataracts may develop later in life as a result of lens replacement surgery. About one in 500 people develop significant sight loss post-RLE, another type of lens replacement surgery.

If your surgeon suggests “monofocal” procedures, these improve distance sight but you will still need glasses for close work.

Seeing in style



Gone are the days when glasses were strictly functional. As a styling expert and creator of The Eyewear Styling Academy, **Eva Davé** reveals how to select your dream glasses and wear them with confidence.

APPRECIATE SHAPE AND FORM

“STYLE YOUR FRAMES BASED ON YOUR FACIAL FEATURES AND YOUR SPECTACLES CAN OOOZE FABULOUSNESS, ELEGANCE AND FUN.”

- **THE BROWLINE** — following the natural shape of your brow will lift and open your eyes, rather than creating two harsh lines on your face.
- **CHEEKBONES** — these help you discover appropriate widths. Many women’s cheekbones are the widest part of their face, so use them as the frame in which to set your specs.
- **EYES** — size and shape are key to finding optimum lens and frame size. Use these to judge measurements horizontally and vertically.
- **PERSONALITY** — if you have delicate features, but have a bigger, more creative sense of style, it’s OK to bend the rules a little. And vice versa. As long as the browline and spacing between the eyes are naturally balanced by the eyewear, it’s all about you!

FAMILIAR FACES, FABULOUS FRAMES



Prue’s collaboration with eyewear designer, Ronit Furst, gives you access to her bold and beautiful style. Buy yours at pruebyronitfurst.com



Oprah rocks her statement specs everywhere from the red carpet to *SuperSoul Sunday*. Be it pink glitter or grey tortoiseshell, you can buy some of her favourite frames at peepers.com



Simple and refined is Meryl’s approach to eyewear. Follow her lead and stick to thin frames and cat-eye shapes to achieve her classic look.

LET THESE FABULOUS FRAMES INSPIRE YOUR NEXT LOOK.



Cherry Reds, £169, **Victor and Rolf**



Osiris virtuous, £129, **Specsavers**



Basic satin grey, £129, **Karen Millen**



Shy Blue, £129, **Cath Kidston**



OSIRIS Shy Blu, £129, **Specsavers**



20 Years TMA special edition, £320, **Silhouette**