

Better Access to Quality Eye Care

Nebraska's Doctors of Optometry

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Five Tips for a Lifetime of Healthy Vision *March - Save Your Vision Month* **Nebraska Optometric Association offers sight-saving advice**

Lincoln, NE – To recognize Save Your Vision Month, the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA) today released the results of the American Optometric Association's (AOA) annual American Eye-Q® survey. According to Dr. Darren Wright, NOA President, the annual survey is intended to help people preserve vision throughout their lifetime.

"Vision plays an important role in daily life – every waking minute, the eyes are working hard to see the world around us. 40 percent of Americans worry about losing their eyesight over their ability to walk or hear," Dr. Wright said.

"It's easy to incorporate steps into our daily routine to ensure healthy eyes and vision. Eating right, protecting against UV rays and visiting your local eye doctor on a yearly basis are just a few things that can help keep your eyes and vision strong," Dr. Wright said.

1. Schedule yearly comprehensive exams

Eye care should begin early in life. The Nebraska Optometric Association urges parents to bring infants six to 12 months of age to their local optometrist for a thorough assessment; under the Affordable Care Act, vision coverage is part of the Pediatric Essential Health Benefit. The good news is that millions of children (up to age 19) now have access to yearly comprehensive eye exams and follow-up care and treatment, such as eyeglasses, through their local doctor of optometry. Comprehensive exams performed by an optometrist not only evaluate a patient's vision, but can also detect certain serious health problems, such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

"Early detection and treatment is the best way to maintain good vision at any age," Dr. Wright said. "Seeing a doctor of optometry yearly will help keep patients on the path to healthy eyes and vision throughout their lives."

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2. Protect against UV rays

Long-term exposure to the sun poses significant risk not just to your skin, but to your eyes as well. No matter what the season, it's extremely important to wear sunglasses, choosing a pair that block more than 95 percent of UV-A and more than 99 percent of UV-B radiation.

3. Give your eyes a break from digital device use

Two-thirds of Americans spend up to 7 hours a day using computers or other digital devices such as tablets and smart phones. This constant eye activity increases the risk for computer vision syndrome (CVS) and can cause problems such as dry eye, eyestrain, headaches, neck and/or backache, and fatigue. The Nebraska Optometric Association recommends that people practice the 20/20/20 rule (every 20 minutes, take a 20 second break and look at something 20 feet away).

4. Eat your greens!

As part of a healthful diet, eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day—particularly the leafy green variety. Six nutrients — antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, essential fatty acids, vitamins C and E and the mineral zinc — have been identified as helping to protect eyesight and promote eye health. Since the body doesn't make these nutrients naturally, it's important that they are incorporated into a daily diet and, in some cases, supplemented with vitamins.

5. Practice safe wear and care of contact lenses

More than 40 million Americans use contact lenses to improve vision; while some adhere to the medical guidelines for wearing contacts, many are breaking the rules and putting their vision at risk. Contact lens wearers who don't follow their optometrist's recommendations for use and wear can experience symptoms such as blurred or fuzzy vision, red or irritated eyes, pain in and around the eyes or, a more serious condition in which the cornea becomes inflamed, also known as keratitis.

To learn more about eye and vision health, or to find a nearby doctor of optometry, please visit www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com.

About the survey: The eighth annual American Eye-Q[®] survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 15-18, 2013 using an online methodology, PSB interviewed 1,000 Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of U.S. general population. (Margin of error at 95 percent confidence level)

About the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA):

The NOA represents over 240 doctors of optometry serving in more than 80 communities throughout the state. Doctors of Optometry (ODs) are the independent primary health care professionals for the eye. Optometrists examine, diagnose, treat, and manage disease, injuries, and disorders of the visual system, the eye, and associated structures as well as identify related systemic conditions affecting the eyes. Association members in Nebraska are also leading providers of pediatric vision care and offer two statewide public service programs to serve children. Learn more about both programs and other valuable eye care information on the Nebraska Optometric Association website at www.BetterEyecareNebraska.com