

2004 Newsletter

Contact lens care

Patient compliance with lens replacement schedules and care products remains a challenge. A recent industry study indicated that approximately one-half of patients using two-week and one-month soft lenses are noncompliant in their lens replacement schedules.

Appropriate product use and proper lens care promote good, safe ocular health. The contact lens case is the most likely potential reservoir for contact lens related infections. Contact lens case care is necessary in preventing the formation of bacterial biofilms in the case wells. Once formed, these biofilms become persistent and protect the bacteria from the disinfecting effects of the storage solutions. Your case care should include the following:

- Don't top of storage solution in the case
- Empty the lens case after removing lenses and rinse with either fresh solution or hot water.
- Leave the lens case open, allowing it to air dry during the day.
- Scald the case with freshly boiled water once a week.
- Replace the case with each new bottle of solution.

Making a connection between dry eye and omega-3

Investigators from the Department of Ophthalmology, Harvard Medical School recently presented the results of their study, which demonstrates that Omega-3 oils found in flaxseed and fish decreased the risk of developing dry eye syndrome.

Children's Vision Failing the Grade in Ontario

A new provincial study reveals that 86 percent of adult Ontarians agree that all children should have an annual eye exam before starting school each fall, yet thousands of elementary school children have never had their eyes examined and are at risk of vision-related learning problems. The study, conducted by Ipsos Reid highlights that many parents are not acting on their good intentions. Less than one quarter of children under the age of ten has an eye examination by an optometrist each year. Studies show that one child in every six or nearly 300,000 children in Ontario have a vision problem that needs correction.

Children depend on their vision as much as 80 percent of the time while learning in the early grades. Problem solving skill, class participation, use of information and cooperation with others, including conflict resolution, are put at risk by the quality of their vision. Many Ontario parents are under the impression that their children will be screened for vision problems at school. That is not the case. Parents need to know that eye examinations by optometrists are covered by OHIP for children under the age of 19.



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Eyes in the Media

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Breaking News . . .The provincial Liberal government released their new budget in May 2004 in which they announced that “**routine optometry exams**” would no longer be covered by OHIP. Those patients affected by these cuts are between the ages of 20 and 64. Children 19 and under and seniors 65 and over will continue to be covered for a yearly exam. The implementation date is **November 1st 2004** according to a letter from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Services Division. We will keep our patients informed as further details become available.

By de-insuring eye exams, the liberal government will be saving approximately 80 million dollars. This appears like a huge savings but what the government does not tell you is reflected in the following recent studies published last year:

Blindness is on the rise and has Canadians scared. A new poll from Environics Research (survey of 2011 Canadians over the age of 30) revealed that 69% of Canadians fear losing their sight more than losing their hearing or both legs. Furthermore, 37% would sell everything they owned, house included to avoid going blind. Treatment, rehabilitation and disability benefits related to vision loss cost Canadian governments about \$1 billion last year. Add in more indirect costs, costs to families and loss of quality of life, and the true cost of blindness soars. Public education would get people to treatment faster. The survey reports only 1/3 of Canadians know that ARMD (Age Related Macular Degeneration) has something to do with the eyes, and a mere 5% of Canadians know that it is the leading cause of blindness. Glaucoma and diabetes round out the pack of leading blindness causes in Canada and around the world.

Ontario government shortsighted cutbacks put people with diabetes at risk for blindness. Diabetes is reaching epidemic levels in North America. According to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, as many as 600,000 people in Ontario have diabetes with another 200,000 who have it but do not know it yet. A new study in Ontario has found that screening for diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in Canadians aged 30 to 69, is far below recommended rates and has dropped further since the provincial government reduced OHIP coverage for comprehensive eye examinations in

1998 to once in every 2 years for adults. All people with diabetes are at risk of this eye complication and the longer you have diabetes, the greater the chance of experiencing some form of retinopathy. Unfortunately, patients may be waiting for their vision to change or become blurred before seeking advice from their optometrist. It is recommended that people with diabetes, who are at risk for sight threatening complications, have annual comprehensive eye exams. For more information on the impact of diabetes on the eyes, visit the Ontario Association of Optometrists web site at www.eyecareoao.com

Are Your Eyes Healthy? Only your eye doctor can tell you. Only optometrists and physicians have the legal qualifications, training, instruments, skills and expertise to diagnose eye disease and vision problems and to prescribe the appropriate treatment. During a complete eye examination, your optometrist will perform a series of painless tests and assessments to determine the causes of any blurred vision or signs of potential vision loss. It is important to note that Refractive Error (a problem where the eye's optics do not focus the image properly and is corrected by glasses) is only one cause of blurred vision. Vision loss can also be a symptom of more serious health problems like Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration, Retinal Detachment, and systemic diseases such as Diabetes or Multiple Sclerosis.

What is a "Sight Test"? You may have seen advertising in optical stores for "Sight Testing". A sight test by an Optician is not a proper, full eye exam. Rather, it is a measure of refractive error and it assumes that reduced vision is only due to needing glasses. In Ontario, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care does not permit independent sight testing by opticians as a legal diagnostic procedure.

What about offers of a "free exam"? Nothing is free! The cost of an optician's sight test is usually hidden in the cost of the eyeglasses. Opticians will only provide the results of the 'free' sight test if eyeglasses are purchased from the same store. Don't confuse an incomplete sight test with a comprehensive eye examination provided by your optometrist.

What's new around the office? Come in and admire our lovely new mural in the **Kids Korner** hand-painted by one of our patients, Karen Hill Richardson. It took about a week to complete and kept our patients attention while it was in progress. Our children's area also offers books and toys to keep the little ones busy during your visit to the office.

Congratulations to Dr. Marta Witer and Mark Van Elsberg (Dr. Andrea Mierzynski's husband). Both successfully underwent custom LASIK with new intralase technology at TLC early this year and are now enjoying their new vision! We welcome you to speak to any of the optometrists here if you have been considering laser eye surgery. Additionally, Mark's surgery was filmed and has been featured on TLC's latest infomercial on Toronto 1 and CFTO.