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8 Ways to Protect Your Eyesight

Sight-threatening eye problems affect one in six adults aged 45 and older. And the risk for vision loss increases with age. In fact, a recent American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) report estimates that more than 43 million Americans will develop age-related eye diseases by the year 2020.

Tips For Protecting Your Eyes

To protect your eyesight and keep your eyes healthy as you age, consider these simple guidelines:

1. **Be aware of your risk for eye diseases.** Find out about your family's health history. Do you or any of your family suffer from diabetes or have high blood pressure? Are you over the age of 65? Are you an African-American over the age of 40? Any or all of these traits increase your risk for sight-threatening eye diseases. Regular eye exams can detect problems early and help preserve your eyesight.

People who tend to drink 3 or more glasses of soda daily have 62% more



tooth decay, fillings, and tooth loss than others.

FUN TOOTHBRUSH FACT:
The most popular toothbrush color is blue.
What color is yours?



91% of patients with heart disease also have periodontitis

News You Can Use
"Oral Health and Save Your Vision" Month

Flossing
once a DAY
INCREASES your
Life
expectancy by
6 years



Orthodontist Anchorage

Oral Health: A Window To Your Overall Health

Your oral health is more important than you might realize. Get the facts about how the health of your mouth, teeth and gums can affect your general health.

Did you know that your oral health offers clues about your overall health — or that problems in your mouth can affect the rest of your body? Protect yourself by learning more about the connection between your oral health and overall health.

Like many areas of the body, your mouth is teeming with bacteria — most of them harmless. Normally the body's natural defenses and good oral health care, such as daily brushing and flossing, can keep these bacteria under control. However, without proper oral hygiene, bacteria can reach levels that might lead to oral infections, such as tooth decay and gum disease.

In addition, certain medications — such as decongestants, antihistamines, painkillers, diuretics and antidepressants — can reduce saliva flow. Saliva washes away food and neutralizes acids produced by bacteria in the mouth, helping to protect you from microbial invasion or

overgrowth that might lead to disease.

Studies also suggest that oral bacteria and the inflammation associated with periodontitis — a severe form of gum disease — might play a role in some diseases. In addition, certain diseases, such as diabetes and HIV/AIDS, can lower the body's resistance to infection, making oral health problems more severe.

Your oral health might contribute to various diseases and conditions, including:

- **Endocarditis.** Endocarditis is an infection of the inner lining of your heart (endocardium). Endocarditis typically occurs when bacteria or other germs from another part of your body, such as your mouth, spread through your bloodstream and attach to damaged areas in your heart.
- **Cardiovascular disease.** Some research suggests that heart disease, clogged arteries and stroke might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria can cause.
- **Pregnancy and birth.** Periodontitis has been linked to premature birth and low birth weight.



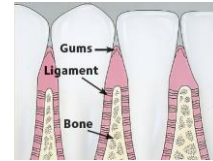
2. **Have regular exams to check for diabetes and high blood pressure.** If left untreated, these diseases can cause eye problems. In particular, diabetes and high blood pressure can lead to diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, glaucoma and ocular hypertension.

3. **Look for changes in your vision.** If you start noticing changes in your vision, see your eye doctor immediately. Trouble signs include double vision, hazy vision and difficulty seeing in low light conditions. Other signs to look for are frequent flashes of light, floaters, and eye pain and swelling. All of these signs and symptoms can indicate a potential eye health problem that needs immediate attention.

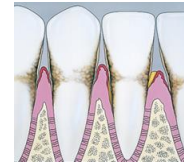
4. **Exercise more frequently.** According to the AAO, some studies suggest that regular exercise – such as walking – can reduce the risk of macular degeneration by up to 70%.

5. **Protect your eyes from the sun's UV rays.** You should always wear sunglasses with proper UV protection to shield your eyes from the sun's harmful rays. This may reduce your risk of cataracts and other eye damage.

Effects of Periodontal Disease



Teeth are held firmly in place by the gums, bone and periodontal ligament. Gums hug the teeth tightly. There is little or no buildup of plaque and tartar.



In time, as plaque and tartar build up along the gum line, plaque bacteria break down the soft tissues that support the tooth. As the disease progresses, bacteria attack the bone tissue also.

Certain conditions also might affect your oral health, including:

- **Diabetes.** Diabetes reduces the body's resistance to infection — putting the gums at risk. Gum disease appears to be more frequent and severe among people who have diabetes. Research shows that people who have gum disease have a harder time controlling their blood sugar levels, and that regular periodontal care can improve diabetes control.
- **HIV/AIDS.** Oral problems, such as painful mucosal lesions, are common in people who have HIV/AIDS.
- **Osteoporosis.** Osteoporosis — which causes bones to become weak and brittle — might be linked with periodontal bone loss and tooth loss. Drugs used to treat osteoporosis carry a small risk of damage to the bones of the jaw.
- **Alzheimer's disease.** Worsening oral health is seen as Alzheimer's disease progresses.

Other conditions that might be linked to oral health include eating disorders, rheumatoid arthritis, head and neck cancers, and Sjogren's syndrome — an immune system disorder that causes dry mouth.

Because of these potential links, tell your dentist if you're taking any medications or have had any changes in your overall health — especially if you've had any recent illnesses or you have a chronic condition, such as diabetes.

To protect your oral health, practice good oral hygiene every day. For example:

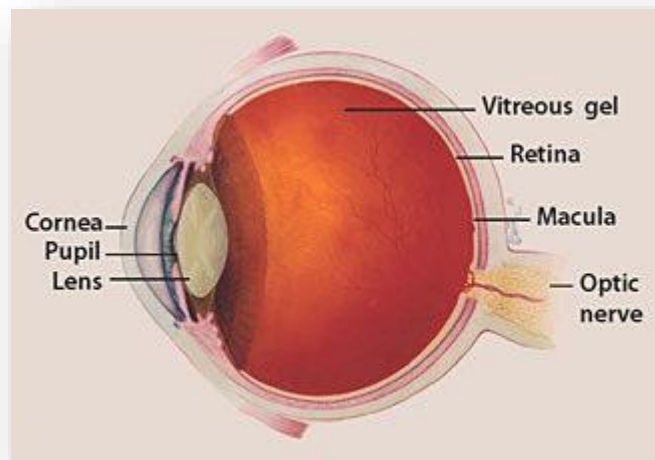
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss daily.
- Eat a healthy diet and limit between-meal snacks.
- Replace your toothbrush every three to four months or sooner if bristles are frayed.
- Schedule regular dental checkups and cleanings.
- Avoid tobacco use.

Also, contact your dentist as soon as an oral health problem arises. Taking care of your oral health is an investment in your overall health.

TIPS FOR PROTECTING YOUR EYES *cont'd*

- 6. Eat a healthy and balanced diet.** Numerous studies have shown that antioxidants can possibly reduce the risk of cataracts. These antioxidants are obtained from eating a diet containing plentiful amounts of fruits and colorful or dark green vegetables. Studies have also shown that eating fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids may also prevent macular degeneration.
- 7. Get your eyes checked at least every two years.** A thorough eye exam, including dilating your pupils, can detect major eye diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, which has no early warning signs or symptoms. A comprehensive eye exam also can ensure that your prescription for eyeglasses or contact lenses is accurate and up-to-date.
- 8. Don't smoke.** The many dangers of smoking have been well documented. When it comes to eye health, people who smoke are at greater risk of developing age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.

Following these steps is no guarantee of perfect vision throughout your lifetime. But maintaining a healthy lifestyle and having regular eye exams will certainly decrease your risk of sight-stealing eye problems and help you enjoy your precious gift of eyesight to the fullest.



In His Service,
H-3 ministry

'Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.'
III John 1:2 NAS

resources this issue

Resources: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/dental/art-20047475>
<http://www.eye-smile.com/eye-smile-vision/your-eye-health/vision-over-60/8-ways-to-protect-your-eyesight/>