

How To Take Care Of Your Eyes Every Day, According To Experts

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It's easy to go through the day without paying much attention to your eyeballs, or their overall health. But it's *also* easy to add in a few habits here and there in an effort to take better care of your eyes. And maybe even prevent issues down the road.

Of course, the best way to maintain eye health is by getting regular checkups. "Taking care of your eyes starts with a trip to your eye doctor *every year* for a comprehensive exam — not just a vision screening or a refraction," Dr. Askia Saunders, a network doctor from Eyeconic in Chicago, tells Bustle. "A comprehensive eye exam looks at the overall health of your eyes."

Besides testing how well you can see, these exams can also help detect early signs of health conditions that can impact your eyes, Saunders says, such as diabetes, high cholesterol, and hypertension. "Eye care is healthcare and should be on the top of everyone's list each year — just like a routine physical or going to the dentist," he says.

That said, there are things you can do every day, as well, to protect your eyes and take better care of them. Read on for a few simple tips that can make a big difference, according to experts.

1. Give Your Eyes A Break

"You use your eyes every waking moment of the day," Dr. Kerry Solomon, an ophthalmologist with Carolina Eyecare Physicians, tells Bustle. "And with today's technology, your eyes are working harder than ever."

This is especially true if you use a computer for work and spend multiple hours per day staring into a screen, which can lead to issues like eyestrain and dry eyes. "Give them adequate breaks throughout the day and plenty of sleep at night to allow them to rest, repair, and recover," Solomon says.

2. Wear Sunglasses More Often

"Aside from aging, UV (ultraviolet) exposure is the most common factor that can effect our eye health," Dr. Harbir Sian, BSc, OD, an optometrist with HighstreetEyecare Center, tells Bustle. So this is a really good reason to carry sunglasses around with you and pop them on more often.

"Common conditions such as cataracts and macular degeneration are closely linked to UV exposure," Sian says. "It is very important to wear sunglasses as often as possible.

This includes cloudy days because UV rays do penetrate through the clouds." Just make sure they're the kind that offer UV protection, so they'll actually protect your eyes.

3. Use Blue-Light-Blocking Glasses

You might also want to protect your peepers by wearing blue-light-blocking glasses, since "computers, smartphones, and other devices emit blue light," Dr. Chris Walton, a board-certified ophthalmologist, tells Bustle. This type of light can lead to eye irritation and digital eyestrain, Walton says, which can increase your risk of macular degeneration over time, due to the way it changes in the retina.

Apart from blinking more often while you work, taking breaks to give your eyes a rest, and walking away from the screen, Walton says, you can also don some specs. "Blue light glasses do successfully block some of the potentially harmful light emitted by computers and other devices," he says.

4. Add In "Eye-Friendly" Nutrients

You may also be able to boost the health of your eyes by adding a few key nutrients into your routine, especially the ones that have been proven to lower the risk of certain eye disease, including citrus fruits, green leafy vegetables, nuts, and cold-water fish, Solomon says. All help provide the nutrients your eyes need to function properly, including vitamin C, zinc, lutein, beta-carotene, and omega-3 fatty acids.

5. Spend Time Outside

When you think about it, you probably spend a lot of time inside looking at things up close — like your phone, computer, TV, books, and so on. But to keep your eyes strong you'll want to go out into the world and look at things that are further away.

In fact, "studies have shown that spending more time outdoors noticeably decreases the risk of nearsightedness," Sian says. "This can be explained, in part, by the fact that we tend to be looking at objects in the distance outdoors versus near objects indoors."

If you don't have time to go outside, you can still give your eyes a much-needed break. "We often recommend the 20-20-20 rule," Sian says, "which means take a break every 20 minutes, look in the distance (20 feet), for 20 seconds."

6. Get Some Exercise

By taking care of your entire body with exercise and eating nutritious foods, you'll in turn be taking good care of your eyes. "In general, we know that staying healthy can prevent systemic conditions such as hypertension and diabetes," Sian says. "Both of these conditions can directly affect eye health and vision. So, staying active and healthy can help to prevent serious eye conditions."

It doesn't matter how you exercise, either, as long as you're moving more. If you want to hit up the gym, go for it. If you prefer strolling around outside, make that your thing. By keeping your overall health in mind, you'll be benefiting your eyes, too.

7. Take Your Contacts Out

"Eyes do not need a break from spectacles, but they do need a break from contact lenses," Howard R. Krauss, MD, a surgical neuro-ophthalmologist at Providence Saint John's Health Center, tells Bustle. So if you aren't taking 'em out at the end of the day, now may be the time to make a change.

"If the eyes are red or irritated, contact lenses should be removed so as to reduce the risk of corneal ulcers and scars, and contact lenses should be removed when ready for sleep," Krauss says, adding that sleeping with them in can increase your risk of eye infection.

8. Stay Away From Smoke

Whether you smoke, or just hang around people who do, it's important to keep in mind that it cannot only impact your overall health, but also take a toll on your eyes. For example, numerous studies have shown that smoking increases your risk for many eye diseases, including cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), Solomon says.

As for secondhand smoke, smoke in the air can be a direct irritant of the eyes, Krauss says, and that can increase your chance of eye issues like cataracts.

9. Blink More Often

Want an easy way to take care of your eyes? Simply make a conscious effort to blink more often throughout the day. "When you're on a screen, you subconsciously blink less because of the amount of focus you're using," Dr. Charissa Lee, director of education at Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, tells Bustle.

And here's how you can make it a habit. "Each time you get up to use the restroom or go to a meeting, try to do five complete blinks to remoisten your eyes," Lee says.

"Complete blinking is important to activate your oil glands in your lids and to spread these beneficial oils — and your protective tear film layer — across your eyes."

10. Clean Around Your Eyes

To take good care of your eyes you'll want to make sure the area around them stays as clean as possible, especially as a way to prevent an eye condition known as blepharitis.

While it may sound weird, "bacteria and parasites can live along the eyelids," Dr. Ming Wang, MD, PhD, of Wang Vision 3D Cataract & LASIK Center, tells Bustle. And it's these organisms that can create inflammation that causes eyes to be dry, scratchy, red, watery, and irritated, Wang says.

To wash away dirt from the day, he recommends washing around your eyes with a gentle cleanser. Just check with your eye doctor first to see which ones they recommend.

11. Make An Eye Appointment

While you obviously don't need to go to the eye doctor every day, it's also not a good idea to ignore eye or vision problems, or wait until you notice a problem before making an appointment, Solomon says. And this is especially true since many eye diseases don't even have early symptoms, making it even *more* necessary to call in the professionals.

"Getting your eyes examined regularly is critical in early detection and treatment," Solomon says. "How often you should get your eyes examined depends on several factors, including your age, eye health, and vision needs."

There are, however, lots of little things you can do every day to take good care of your eyes, including wearing sunglasses, giving them breaks throughout the day, and even blinking more often. It really can be as easy as that.