

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and black-rimmed glasses. She is looking down at a red object, possibly a contact lens, which is being held in front of her by another person's hand. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text 'Eye Care' is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

Eye Care

Common Eye Problems

Sustaining an eye injury can be a scary experience, especially if blurring or vision obstruction occurs. Knowing what to do for different injuries can make the difference between a full recovery and lasting repercussions.

One plan of action is consistent across all types of eye injuries: Do not touch, rub or apply pressure to the eye, as you can cause further damage. Avoid applying ointment or medication to the eye before having it looked at by an ophthalmologist, who specializes in the anatomy, physiology and diseases of the eye.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology offers a full range of tips for addressing and dealing with specific eye injuries. Of course, consult with your physician before taking any action yourself.

Here are some of the most common eye injuries and steps you can take to avoid causing further harm to yourself.

CUT TO THE EYE

If you suffer from a laceration to your eye, gently place a shield over it. If you don't have a shield, use the bottom of a paper cup taped to the bones surrounding the eye until you get medical attention.

Remember to never rinse with water or try to remove an object stuck in your eye. Also avoid using aspirin or anti-inflammatory drugs that can thin the blood and increase bleeding.

FOREIGN MATERIALS

If you get a particle or foreign material in your eye, the main thing to avoid is rubbing your eye. Especially if you're

not sure what the material is, you could cause scratching or a laceration of the eyeball.

Instead, lift the upper eyelid over the lashes of your lower

lid or try blinking several times. Your natural tears should be able to flush out the foreign object without you having to touch your eye.

Eye injuries are serious. If you feel a pain that is out of the ordinary or notice any visual disturbances after an injury, go the emergency room.



Nearsightedness

Myopia, commonly referred to as nearsightedness, is a vision condition in which you can clearly see objects near to you but struggle to see objects farther away because of blurred vision.

This issue often worsens during childhood and adolescence due to a variety of factors.

The Mayo Clinic defines the following as the most common symptoms of nearsightedness:

- Blurry vision when looking at distant objects;
- The need to squint or partially close the eyelids to see clearly;
- Headaches caused by eye-strain;
- Difficulty seeing while driving a vehicle, especially at night (night myopia);
- Needing to sit closer to the television, movie screen or the front of the classroom;
- Seeming to be unaware of distant objects;
- Excessive blinking; and
- Frequent rubbing of eyes.

Nearly 30 percent of Americans suffer from myopia, according to the National Eye Institute.

Scientists agree that some combination of genetic risks and childhood activities are playing a role in the number of myopia sufferers, which only looks to increase in the coming years.

BENEFITS OF PLAYING OUTSIDE

A Chinese study published in September 2015 in the *Journal of the American*



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Medical Association reported that encouraging children to spend more time outdoors may be a simple and cost-effective way to improve their vision as well as general health.

The study, conducted by the

Zhongshan Ophthalmic Center in Guangzhou, found 12 schools willing to take part in the experiment that required half of them to assign their first-graders to an extra period of outside recess. The three-

year-long experiment uncovered a 9.1 percent difference in the incidence rate of myopia.

Researchers found that a combination of factors led to the variance, including exposure to sunlight, forcing the eye

to focus on objects of varying distances and routine exercise.

If you or your child have some form of nearsightedness, speak with your eye doctor about forming the best plan for you and your family.

Choosing an Eye Doctor

Everyone needs a trusted eye doctor for everyday healthcare and injuries that arise. Choosing the eye doctor who is right for you is an important decision for your overall wellbeing.

Before you start asking your friends and family members for referrals, the first step is understanding the difference between optometrists and ophthalmologists.

WHAT IS AN OPTOMETRIST?

Optometrists examine eyes for both vision and health problems. They also correct vision issues by prescribing eyeglasses and contact lenses, or by providing care and therapy.

Optometrists also can prescribe medications to treat certain eye problems and diseases. Your state's board of optometry — which you can find online — will detail the scope of the medical care eye doctors can give, as it varies by state.

WHAT IS AN OPHTHALMOLOGIST?

An ophthalmologist is a medical doctor trained to perform eye exams, diagnose and treat disease, prescribe medications and perform eye surgery. They, like optometrists, also write prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses.

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, ophthalmologists generally complete four years of college, four years of medical school, one year of internship, and a



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minimum of three years of hospital-based residency in ophthalmology.

CHOOSING YOUR DOCTOR

So how do you know if you need to seek out the services of an optometrist or ophthalmol-

ogist? That depends on the issue you are dealing with. If your eyes are healthy and don't require specialized treatment, your local optometrist will fit your needs.

Most optometrists can medically treat common eye prob-

lems, including dry eyes and eye infections, as well as chronic diseases such as glaucoma. Ophthalmologists specialize in providing the entire scope of treatment options, including eye surgery.

If you already have a serious

medical eye problem such as glaucoma or macular degeneration, you may require medical or surgical eye care by a specially trained ophthalmologist. Speak with the eye doctors in your area to find the right fit for your particular situation.