



Protect Your Vision

CHALLENGE
Keep your eyes
healthy and safe.

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Protect your vision by eating a healthy diet and wearing safety gear to protect your eyes when appropriate.
2. Read "Protect Your Vision."
3. To complete the health Challenge™, protect your vision on at least 22 days this month.
4. Keep a record of your completed Challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



Picture Perfect Eyesight

French painter Claude Monet had a gift for looking at the natural environment and capturing it on canvas. He painted sunsets, haystacks, fruit trees, and famously his own garden. In his long career, he created more than 1,000 masterpieces. But in the last 20 years of his life, Monet painted in a race against his failing eyesight.

"I was forced to give up a lot of promising beginnings and abandon the rest," Monet wrote in 1922. "On top of that, my poor eyesight makes me see everything in a complete fog."

Eye diseases and injuries can damage your vision. About 35 million Americans suffer from eye diseases like cataracts (Monet's condition), glaucoma, and dry eye. And about 2.5 million people a year sustain eye injuries. Fortunately, many eye diseases are treatable and preventable. Regular checkups and a healthy lifestyle can help. And about 90 percent of all eye injuries can be prevented by using protective eyewear. Here's how to keep your eyes safe and healthy:

Rest Your Eyes

Most people spend a fair amount of time sitting in front of a computer, watching TV, or looking at smart phones and other electronic devices. All that screen time adds up. Adults spend an average of 8.5 hours a day staring at a screen. Studies have found that even one hour of continuous screen time can cause eye strain. Try these tips to rest your eyes:

- ✓ **Keep light from shining into your eyes.** If you work at a computer screen, darken the screen.
- ✓ **Eliminate glare.** Use ambient lighting. Turn off or dim overhead lights when working on your computer or watching TV.
- ✓ **Read in a well-lit area.** Reading in low-contrast lighting increases eye strain.
- ✓ **Try reading glasses.** You can buy them without a prescription. Try the different strengths to see which makes reading easiest.
- ✓ **Take a break.** If you're in front of a computer screen for long periods, take a 10-minute break every two or three hours.
- ✓ **Close your eyes more often.** Rest your eyes briefly when you're on a bus, talking on the phone, or listening to music.
- ✓ **Blink more often.** Look away from your computer screen every 20 minutes. And look at something else for 20 seconds before resuming your work.
- ✓ **Use eye drops sparingly.** Drops can temporarily eliminate eye discomfort, but prolonged use can make your condition worse.

Watch for Warning Signs

Many eye diseases are genetic or age-related. Still, your lifestyle, level of exercise, and diet can affect your vision. Many eye diseases such as cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration. can be prevented. Watch for the warning signs of these common eye diseases.

Cataracts – If your vision becomes blurry, cloudy, or dim, you may have a cataract in one or both eyes. French painter Claude Monet knew his vision was failing when colors no longer seemed bright and vibrant. But you don't have to let cataracts cloud your vision as you age.

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Glaucoma – Glaucoma is caused by fluid and pressure changes in the eye. At first there are no obvious signs of the disease. But over time, blind spots develop and the optic nerve is permanently damaged.

Macular Degeneration – Age-related macular degeneration damages the macula – a small area in the retina of the eye. This part of the eye helps you read small print and see details in low light. Symptoms include blurriness, need for more light to see, hazy vision, and blank or blurry spots in your central vision.

To reduce your risk for eye disease:

- Wear sunglasses and a hat with a brim to block ultraviolet sunlight to help delay cataracts.
- Quit smoking to increase the supply of vitamins and nutrients to your eyes.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables high in antioxidants that support eye health.
- Limit alcohol use to prevent cell damage to the lens of the eye.
- Eat less sugar and grains to lower insulin levels and reduce eye pressure.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight to reduce the risk for eye diseases that have been linked to obesity.
- Have your vision checked regularly. See your doctor if you experience vision problems.

Learn more about eye disease and prevention at <http://tinyurl.com/7843722>



Recommended Guidelines for Eye Exams

Before age 5:	Should be screened for common childhood problems such as a crossed eye, lazy eye, nearsightedness, and farsightedness.
Puberty to age 39:	Should be checked if they experience any eye problems such as pain, floaters, flashes of light, blurry vision, or eye injury.
Ages 40 to 65:	Should be examined every two to four years.
Everyone over 65:	Should be examined every one to two years.



People at higher risk for eye diseases need to be examined more often. For example, adults with diabetes should have yearly eye exams. Other people at higher risk include African Americans over age 40 and people with a family history of eye disease or a personal history of eye injury.

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology

Look at Your Exercise Habits

Overweight people are more than twice as likely to experience vision loss than those who maintain a healthy weight. People who exercise are also at lower risk for vision problems.

A recent study found that people who exercised at least 30 minutes three days a week lowered their risk for age-related macular degeneration by 70 percent. And even people who only walked 12 blocks a few times a week lowered their risk by 30 percent. Researchers believe regular exercise protects your vision by reducing inflammation in the blood vessel walls of your eyes. Exercise also improves your “health age,” which can slow the progress of many age-related eye diseases.

Safety Matters

You don’t have to work in a machine shop or work with toxic chemicals to be at risk for eye injuries. You could injure your eyes cooking, playing sports, or making home repairs. The hazards are everywhere. Most eye injuries are caused by tiny particles such as metal filings, wood chips, chemical sprays, or dust. Wear safety glasses or eye protection when you:

- Play sports like racquetball, handball, or paintball.
- Are in the sun for long periods of time.
- Use solvents, detergents, cleaners, and fertilizers. Read and follow all manufacturer instructions and warning labels.
- Work on cars. Battery acid, sparks, and flying debris can cause eye

First Aid for Common Eye Injuries

Be familiar with basic first aid for minor eye injuries in case of an accident. <http://tinyurl.com/85b5qph>

- injuries. Keep a pair of goggles in your car, and wear them any time you make repairs.
- Use power tools. Flying debris from chain saws, circular saws, hedge trimmers, and other equipment can seriously hurt your eyes.

Just like the famous artist Claude Monet, your eyes are your windows to the world. Make healthy choices to protect your vision. Then enjoy the view for years to come.

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Focus on Healthy Foods

Eating fruits, vegetables, and other healthy foods are good for your heart. They are also good for your eyesight. Recent studies have found that foods high in antioxidants reduce your risk for age-related macular degeneration and cataracts. Fruits and vegetables are the best sources for antioxidants such as beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein, and other nutrients that support eye health.

Most people should eat at least nine servings (4½ cups) of fruits and vegetables a day. To help you keep your eyes healthy, add these antioxidant-rich foods to your diet:

Vitamin A helps protect against macular degeneration. Best sources:

Carrots	Turnip greens	Cantaloupe	Papaya
Sweet potato	Mustard greens	Apricots	Red peppers
Butternut squash	Pink grapefruit	Beet greens	
Kale	Broccoli	Collard greens	



Vitamin C helps prevent glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration. Best sources:

Citrus fruits	Peppers	Brussels sprouts
Berries	Cabbage	Cauliflower
Tomatoes	Broccoli	Cantaloupe



Vitamin E helps prevent cataracts and macular degeneration. Best sources:

Almonds	Egg yolk	Sunflower seeds	Vegetable oils
Hazelnuts	Nuts	Whole wheat	(wheat germ oil
Green leafy	Seafood	and other whole	is especially rich
vegetables	Avocados	cereal grains	in vitamin E)



Sources:

American Academy of Ophthalmology.

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 87(6): 1899-1905.

Archives of Ophthalmology. 203(121): 785-792.

British Journal of Ophthalmology. 90(12): 1461-1463.

Centers for Disease Control and Nutrition.

Council for Research Excellence.

Harvard School of Public Health.

National Institutes of Health.

Prevent Blindness America.



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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you protect your vision.
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you were able to meet this goal. You must meet this goal on at least 22 days during the month to complete the Challenge. Then keep up this healthy practice for a lifetime of good health.

MONTH: <input type="text"/>							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	Weight & weekly summary
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_____ Number of days this month I protected my vision

_____ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

Other wellness projects completed this month:

Name _____ Date _____

