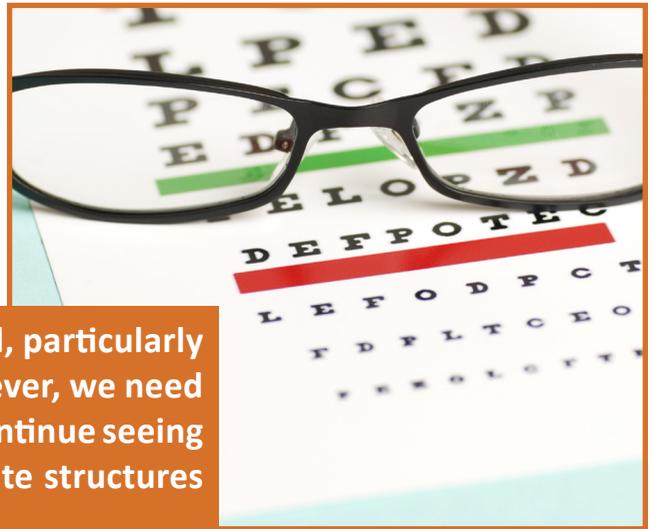


Eyes on the prize: Eye health



It's very easy to take our eyes for granted, particularly if we don't have any eye problems. However, we need to take good care of them if we want to continue seeing the world we live in. Our eyes are delicate structures which can be damaged easily.

Taking care of your eyesight

Your vision is something you never want to be without. To keep your eyes working for you for many years to come, you need to protect them now and take good care of them. Here are some tips to help you to look after your eyesight:

- **Use proper lighting.**

Poor lighting in a room when you are reading, watching the television, or using the computer, adds extra strain to the eye by forcing it to adjust to an unfriendly environment. The eyes have to work harder to convey messages to the brain as it is under the pressure of providing sufficient light for proper concentration. Always ensure that the room you are in is well-lit in order to prevent over-tiredness or fatigue to your eyes.

- **Exercise your eyes.**

Eye exercises are great for improving eyesight. Start by focusing your gaze on the tip of your nose without blinking. Remain like this for as long as you can. Then close your eyes and relax. Repeat this a few times throughout the day. This exercise requires concentration and a little practice.

- **Prevent eye infections.**

Avoid rubbing your eyes with your hands, even

though you may think they are clean. Our busy hands are breeding grounds for bacteria, especially with untrimmed nails.

- **Help your eyes relax.**

You can help your eyes relax by saving used teabags and chilling them in the fridge. Placing these over your eyes cools them down after a stressful day. Alternatives include cucumber or chilled teaspoons.

- **Wear protective gear.**

It is important to wear sunglasses that have been developed with the African climate in mind. Choose close-fitting, wraparound sunglasses that are safe for driving. Also look for an eye protection factor (EPF) of 10. Exposing eyes to the sun is thought to play a part in the development of cataracts. If you use corrective eyewear, have your eye specialist check if you are still using the same prescription you were a year ago. Should the prescription need to be changed, it is imperative to have your new lenses fitted to accommodate the new requirements.

Having your eyes checked regularly is important. Correct early diagnosis, treatment, and support can ensure your eyesight is preserved. The signs of eye disease are hard to spot, so having your eyes tested is vital in maintaining healthy eyes.