

# health awareness

CTSI

A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

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## SAVE YOUR VISION MONTH

**M**arch is Save Your Vision Month. Let's "see" how you do in a game of true or false.

**Eating carrots will improve your vision. True!** Yes, carrots contain vitamin A, a necessary nutrient for healthy vision.

**Watching TV or looking at a computer monitor will damage your vision. False!** You may get a headache or your eyes may feel strained, but your vision will not be damaged.

**You don't need to have your vision checked until you reach age 40. False!** Glaucoma, which is a treatable eye disease, can begin before age 40.

Be sure to carve out time for a yearly comprehensive dilated eye exam as you enter your adult years and thereafter. In fact, if you are enrolled in the VSP vi-

sion plan through the County Health Pool, you are eligible to receive an eye exam once every 12 months (\$15 copay) as long as you see a VSP provider.

### Eye Exam

What happens during an eye exam? Your vision provider will place drops in your eyes to dilate (or widen) the pupils. This dilation will let in more light, enabling your provider to see all the way to the back of the eyes. Your vision provider will examine overall eye health and will also be able to detect damage or disease.

### Types of Eye Disease

What types of eye disease will be checked during the exam? You will be checked for glaucoma which is a condition of increased pressure within the eyeball, causing gradual loss of

eyesight and eye-to-brain nerve damage. Glaucoma is not curable, but treatment may help.

During your exam, your provider will also check for diabetic eye disease, a group of conditions affecting diabetics. These conditions include glaucoma and cataracts. It is important to note that all forms of diabetic eye disease are serious due to the possibility of vision loss and blindness.

You will also be checked for age-related macular degeneration. Because there are no warning signs for this condition, dilating the eyes during the exam is the only way to detect early stages. Macular degeneration is more common than glaucoma and cataracts combined, affecting over 10 million Americans. It is caused by the deterioration of the retina's central portion,

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the macula, which controls your ability to read, drive a car, recognize faces and see fine detail, like printed material in a book. Risk for macular degeneration increases with age, most often affecting individuals age 55 and older. The disease is hereditary but environment also plays an important role. Caucasians are more likely to have the disease than African-Americans or Hispanics/Latinos. Unfortunately, there is no cure at present. Late stages of this disease are marked by noticeable vision loss.

### **Family Tree**

Because eye conditions and diseases can be hereditary, it is important to know about your family's eye health history. You may discover you are at high risk for developing one of the conditions mentioned above.

### **Go Fish!**

Eating a nutritious diet will help your eyes stay healthy. Eat carrots and include other colorful fruits and vegetables, especially leafy greens such as spinach, kale and collard greens. Did you know eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, tuna, halibut) will also help keep your eyes healthy?

### **Don't Tip the Scale**

You've heard the overall medical benefits of maintaining a healthy weight, but did you know that your weight can also affect your eyesight? Carrying excess pounds can up your risk for diabetes, which can lead to vision loss (diabetic eye disease such as glaucoma and cataracts). Obesity is also linked to heart

disease which can increase your risk for age-related macular degeneration. If you need help with a weight loss plan, visit with your primary care physician to get started.

### **Ditch Cigarettes**

Quit smoking and your eyes will thank you. Research shows that cigarette smoke contains toxins that are directly linked to macular degeneration. If you are trying to quit tobacco and are enrolled in a CHP medical plan, please contact your Benefits Administrator for specific benefits and coverage details for your plan, including smoking cessation drugs.

### **Shades & Hats**

Wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100% of UV-A and UV-B rays. Put on a wide-brimmed hat

if you will be outside in the sun for an extended period of time watching or playing a sport, gardening, biking, walking, etc.

### **In the Workplace**

If you work at a desk and sit in front of a computer, try to periodically look away from the screen to rest your eyes. When you stare at the screen for long periods of time, your eyes don't blink as often, causing dryness and irritation. Practice the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you and hold your gaze on that spot for 20 seconds. This is a mini-break for weary, strained eyes. If you are required to wear safety goggles for work, please follow your company's safety policy to protect your eyes from workplace hazards.

## **BENEFITS CORNER**

### **Enrollees in the CHP vision plan are eligible for the following benefits when visiting a VSP provider:**

- WellVision Exam - \$15 copay (once every 12 months)
- \$120 frame allowance (once every 24 months)
- \$140 allowance featured frame brands (once every 24 months)
- \$70 frame allowance at Costco (once every 24 months)
- 20% savings on the amount you pay over your allowance
- Eyeglass lenses (single vision, lined bifocal, trifocal lenses) included in prescription glasses (once every 12 months)
- Contact lenses (instead of glasses) \$120 allowance (once every 12 months)
- Contact lens exam (fitting and evaluation) covered up to \$60 (once every 12 months)
- Laser Vision Correction - Average 15% off the regular price or 5% off the promotional price
- For additional CHP Vision benefit information, including OON (Out-of-Network) coverage, please go to [www.ctsi.org](http://www.ctsi.org). Click on CHP for a full VSP Plan Summary and Plan Document.