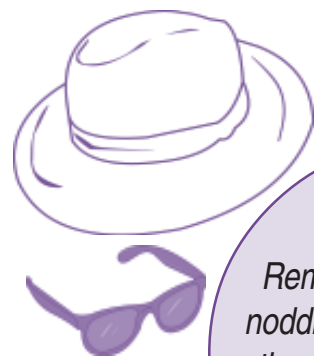


For Eye Health

It is common to have vision problems as we age. To help prevent these problems from developing:

- *Keep blood sugar under control.
- *Have regular eye exams.
- *Protect eyes from bright sunlight with sunhats and dark glasses (UV block).
- *Quit smoking.
- *Eat a wide variety of fruit and vegetables each day, especially produce with deep colors. A wide range of foods protect the eyes. Leafy greens such as spinach, kale and chard, and dark-colored fruits such as blueberries or blackberries (either fresh or frozen) contain antioxidants that help protect vision.



TIP

Remember that pointing, nodding your head or using other body language will not be effective communication with someone who cannot see clearly.

The Ombudsman program can handle your concerns about areas such as elder abuse, client care, consumer rights, etc. For more information, call 1-800-582-7277.

For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medicaid fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.

NEXT ISSUE...HANDLING EMERGENCIES/HEART ATTACK & STROKE



Assistance. Advocacy. Answers on Aging.

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Pamela K. Matura, Executive Director

January 2009

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CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE NEWS

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Vision Loss and Eye Care

Eyeing the Future

A diagnosis of vision loss causes shock, grief, anger and depression. These feelings may be temporary or last for years. Loss of vision means losing the ability to drive, which is the loss of independence.

Over time, most people with vision loss become more confident about living with reduced sight. This confidence will increase if they participate in rehabilitation training. They will begin to trust their new skills and feel better about the future.

Causes of Vision Loss

Some decline in vision is common in most people as they age. The first signs are typically that it becomes more difficult to read small print or to get around in dim lighting. Some people find they can't tell the difference between dark blue and black. These changes are a normal part of aging. However, other vision changes can be much more serious.

A stroke, traumatic brain injury or a brain tumor may cause vision loss or impairment at any age. This type of loss may be temporary or permanent.

Nearly 3.5 million Americans over 40 have some degree of vision loss, most commonly from age-related conditions. Diabetes is a common cause of eye disease. Source: Centers for Disease Control; www.cdc.gov



Common Eye Conditions in People over 50

Macular Degeneration -- The most common cause of vision loss, this disease is characterized by vision loss in the center of eye; blurred vision; straight lines looking wavy; needing more light to see. It can affect either one or both eyes.

Glaucoma -- The leading cause of blindness in the United States. It is characterized by gradual loss of peripheral (side) vision; difficulty driving at night; loss of contrast. It is important to get treatment for early symptoms to prevent total blindness.

Cataracts -- Causes clouding of the normally clear lens of the eye. Its symptoms are hazy vision; difficulty driving at night; double vision; trouble distinguishing colors; sensitivity to glare. Its typically develops gradually. Through surgery, cataracts can be removed and the lens of the eye replaced by a plastic lens.

Article continues on next page>

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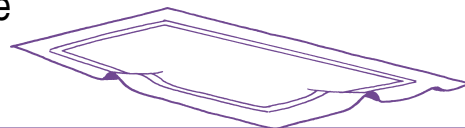
Diabetic Retinopathy -- Typically occurs in people with advanced diabetes and high blood sugar levels. It is caused by leaking blood vessels. Its symptoms are blurred or changing vision; difficulty reading; floaters that affect either central or peripheral vision. Estimates are that 25 percent of people with diabetes have some diabetic retinopathy, but few people develop severe vision problems. There are often no symptoms in the early stages, so people with advanced diabetes should have regular vision exams. The best prevention is maintaining stable blood sugar levels.

A doctor should be seen immediately if a person has any acute or prolonged episodes like blurred vision, flashes of light, blind spots or any other symptom that affects vision.

Inspiration

Never let yesterday use up too much of today.
~Will Rogers

An 85-year-old needs about three times the amount of light a 15-year-old needs to see the same thing. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be different from the floor color. Remove all hazards that might lead to tripping. Tack down loose carpets and tape or tack electrical and telephone cords to walls.



For Eye Health--Checkups

As of July 2007, the American Academy of Ophthalmology has issued a new eye disease screening recommendation for aging adults.

The Academy now recommends that adults with **no signs or risk factors** for eye disease get a baseline eye disease screening at age 40--the time when early signs of disease and changes in vision may start to occur. Based on the results of the initial screening, an ophthalmologist (specialist in eye diseases) will prescribe the necessary intervals for follow-up exams.

For individuals at **any age with symptoms** or risk of eye disease, such as those with a family history of eye disease, diabetes or high blood pressure, the Academy recommends that individuals see their ophthalmologist to determine how frequently their eyes should be examined.

Source: *The Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology*

Alzheimer's Vision Care

A person with Alzheimer's Disease should have regular eye examinations because poor vision can contribute to confusion. These exams can also spot or detect other serious diseases, such as diabetes. Finding and treating symptoms early can prevent serious diseases from getting worse and leading to blindness.

- Tell the doctor of any medicines taken.
- Tell the doctor if there is a family history of glaucoma.

Source: *The Comfort of Home: A Complete Guide for Caregivers; Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) www.caregiver.org; www.cdc.gov; National Eye Institute*

Taking Care of Yourself--FINANCES AND HEALTH

Recently, Northwestern Mutual commissioned a study addressing the financial and physical health of women. It showed that women who take control of their finances are healthier and happier. Being proactive in managing finances meant improved health, happiness, optimism and confidence. The study also reported several smart financial habits that these happy and healthy people practice. They included getting guidance from professionals, having a financial plan, creating short- and long-term goals, making a commitment to action, and staying grounded in reality.

Money matters are a primary cause of stress. During these times of financial turmoil, it's more important than ever to maintain healthy eating and sleeping habits because they help reduce stress. Healthy financial and lifestyle habits can make a difference in these troubled financial times. For more information on the study, check out the website at www.sevenfinancialhabits.com.

Source: *StrongWomen Newsletter; http://www.StrongWomen.com; www.BeWell.com*

LIVE LIFE LAUGHING



Resources for You

Contact your state's Commission for the Blind for information on self-help organizations for those with low vision. Ask for help in finding products ("talking" watches, etc.) and aids that will help the person adjust to low vision. Seek out radio stations that have programs of newspaper readings.

American Foundation for the Blind
(800) AFB-LINE (232-5463)
www.afb.org

Lighthouse International
(800) 829-0500
www.lighthouse.org

National Eye Institute
(301) 496-5248
www.nei.nih.gov