

Eye Health

Tips On Making Healthy Vision Last A Lifetime

(NAPSA)—Vision changes as people get older, but vision loss is not a normal part of aging.

That's the word from Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Eye Institute. He believes that early diagnosis, timely treatment, and appropriate follow-up care can help prevent irreversible vision loss from common eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration.

Dr. Sieving says that it's possible to make healthy vision last a lifetime. To help, he offers the following tips:

- **Know Your Family History.**

Some eye diseases are hereditary. Talk with your family members about their eye health history, then talk with your eye care professional to learn what you can do to protect your vision.

- **Eat Right to Protect Your Sight.** Eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins A and C may help keep your eyes healthy.

- **Give It a Rest.** Work at a computer all day long? Give your eyes a 20/20/20 break: Every 20 minutes, look about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds to reduce eyestrain and fatigue.

- **Let the Sun Shine.** When shopping for sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B radiation.

Early stages of common eye diseases typically have no symptoms and can only be detected through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Pupil dilation allows a doctor to closely examine the back of the eye for signs of eye disease.

The National Eye Institute (NEI), part of the National Institutes of Health, leads the federal



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government's research on the visual system and eye diseases.

NEI supports basic and clinical science programs that result in the development of sight-saving treatments. For example, said Dr. Sieving, recent clinical trials sponsored by the NEI have provided doctors with crucial data regarding prevention and treatment of age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

The Age-Related Eye Disease Study determined that taking high levels of antioxidants and zinc reduces the risk of developing advanced AMD by about 25 percent. The NEI comparison of AMD treatment trials found that the two most commonly used AMD drugs—one that was designed for use in the eye and a much cheaper drug that was developed to treat cancer—are equally effective in treating AMD.

For more information about eye health, visit www.nei.nih.gov/healthyeeyes.