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Keeping Your Eyes Healthy

Vision problems and eye conditions can affect people of all ages. That's why it's so important to take care of your eyes—starting early in life. The following tips can help you keep them safe and healthy:

- **Don't smoke.** This dangerous habit deprives your body of nutrients that are essential in preventing certain eye diseases. If you smoke and need help quitting, talk with your doctor.
- **Enjoy your fruits and veggies.** Eat at least three to five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. In particular, leafy green vegetables such as spinach and kale may benefit your eyes. These foods contain lutein—an antioxidant. This may reduce your risk of some eye conditions.
- **Wear sunglasses.** Exposing your eyes to too much sunlight may lead to cataracts. Make sure your sunglasses block out UVA and UVB rays. And, wear them every time you go outside—even on cloudy or overcast days.
- **Protect against injury.** Certain sports, jobs and activities put your eyes at risk for injury or irritation. Wear appropriate eye gear to help keep them safe.
- **Practice good hygiene.** Avoid touching your eyes. This can help prevent the spread of infections such as pinkeye. Also, don't share eye drops, makeup or contact lens supplies with others.
- **Take care of your contacts.** If you wear contact lenses, be sure to keep them clean. Wash your hands before inserting or removing them. Don't exceed recommended time limits for wearing your lenses. And, remove them if you feel pain.

Eye Exams

Getting your eyes checked is one of the best ways to help them stay healthy. Your eye care specialist can detect and treat diseases. He or she also can correct any vision changes you've experienced. How often you should have an exam depends on factors such as age, health, and your risk of developing eye diseases.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that all children receive vision screening during regular well child visits and vision testing starting at about age 3 years. Talk with your eye doctor about your child's specific needs, especially if you have family history of vision problems or if your child is showing symptoms such as lazy eye, crossed eyes or drooping of the upper eyelid. Periodic eye examinations are recommended for all people over age 18. People over age 65, people with diabetes and those at risk for eye disease may need more frequent evaluations. If you have symptoms such as blurred vision, or risk factors for eye problems, ask your doctor how often you should have eye exams.

Remember, if you have sudden pain, sensitivity, discomfort, redness or blurred or decreased vision, see your doctor or eye care specialist right away.

Sunglasses: A Must for Children and Adults

Sunglasses aren't just a fashion accessory or something that adults need to wear on sunny days. Wearing sunglasses, from birth through old age, can help save your eyesight.

The lens in a child's eye is clear from birth through about age 10. It can't filter out as much sunlight as an adult lens. That means sun exposure can cause more damage before age 10 than after, when the lens begins to get cloudy.

Early exposure, long-term damage

Some studies suggest that 80 percent of sun damage occurs by age 18. Long-term exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays is a big factor in vision loss. Studies indicate that too much sunlight may lead to:



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- Cataracts and age-related macular degeneration, which rob adults of eyesight
- Skin cancer around the eyelids
- Pterygia (benign growths on the eye's surface that can block vision)

There are three types of UV radiation: UV-A, UV-B and UV-C.

- UV-A can damage the macula, the part of the retina that controls central vision.
- UV-B affects the front part of the eye - the cornea and lens - and can cause even more damage than UV-A.
- UV-C is absorbed by the ozone layer and is not dangerous.

Over-exposure to UV-B rays for short periods can lead to corneal sunburn. This can cause pain, a feeling of grit in the eyes and even short-term vision loss. You can get this kind of exposure at the beach or on a ski slope without proper eye protection. For children, this can cause long-term vision problems.

Bright sun and glare also cause immediate problems. Bright sunlight interferes with your vision and ability to see clearly. It causes you to squint and makes your eyes water.

Since proper eye protection helps prevent future vision loss, make sure that:

- Your kids wear sunglasses, and they understand why.
- They keep wearing sunglasses into adulthood.
- You wear sunglasses, too. If you set a good example, your children will be more likely to get into the habit of wearing sunglasses as well.

When to wear sunglasses

Sunglasses are not just for sunny summer days, when UV rays are at least three times higher than in winter. Reflections from snow, water, sand or pavement can intensify UV rays to extremely high levels.

Don't be fooled by a cloudy day. The sun's rays pass right through the haze and thin clouds. When outside, wear sunglasses. Be sure to wear them in the early afternoon when UV radiation is strongest.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) says you should wear sunglasses when you take part in winter sports. You should also wear them at high altitudes, where UV light is more intense. Keep your sunglasses on when you take medications that can increase your sensitivity to sunlight.

Are sunglasses enough?

- **Have your child wear a hat along with sunglasses** - and do the same yourself. When you wear a hat and sunglasses outside, your child will more likely follow your lead.
- **Give your child a wide-brimmed hat to wear.** It will block about half of UV rays and provide extra protection. Even a baseball cap can limit UV rays that hit the eyes from above or around glasses.
- **Teach your children to never look directly into or stare at the sun.** Looking at the sun for too long, even during an eclipse, can cause permanent blindness.
- **Try to keep children out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** This is when the sun's rays are strongest.
- **Keep children younger than six months old out of direct sunlight.** Baby strollers with a canopy or umbrella can help shield them from direct sunlight.

The AAO suggests that children should have a complete eye exam before the age of five.



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Protect Your Eyes from Sun Damage

You may think you're doing all you can to protect yourself from the sun. If you apply sunscreen with a high SPF every time you're outdoors - even on cloudy days - that's a great start, but it's not enough. Your skin isn't the only area of your body that needs protection from the sun's harsh rays, your eyes need protection just as much.

Stepping outside exposes you to ultraviolet (UV) rays and blue light rays (the short wavelengths of the light spectrum). UV and blue light rays are invisible, but can lead to eye disease vision loss. Everyone needs protection, even children.

Studies have shown that exposure to high energy ultraviolet light and blue light without protection may increase your risk of developing cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Both of these can cause vision loss. UV exposure can also cause benign growths (known as pterygia) on the eye's surface and skin cancer around the eyes.

You can also damage your eyes from just a single day in the sun. UV light reflecting off of sand, pavement or snow can burn the cornea (the eye's surface). Photokeratitis, sunburn of the cornea, usually recedes within one to two days. It occurs when the eyes are exposed to large quantities of UV light in a short amount of time. Cumulative exposure to UV rays may be one of the primary causes of cataract, and it may be a risk factor for several eye diseases and conditions.

During the summer, UV radiation is three times greater than in the winter. However, people can be exposed to intense UV rays that are reflected off snow; the exposure rivals that of UV rays as reflected off sand on a beach. You should protect your eyes from the sun all year round.

To defend your eyes against sun damage:

- **Wear sunglasses whenever you're outside**, especially in the early afternoon and in high altitudes - where UV light is most intense.
- **Don't be fooled by cloudy days.** The sun's rays can pass through clouds and haze, so it's still important to protect your eyes.
- **Wear sunglasses that block 99 percent to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays** as well as blue light. Glasses worn at the beach or on ski slopes should be darker to block more light.
- **A percentage of sunglasses are mislabeled**, so always buy sunglasses from a reputable dealer. Your optician can check your glasses to measure the UV protection.
- **Wear a wide-brimmed hat.** A wide brimmed hat or cap will block about half of UV rays. A brimmed hat or cap can also limit UV rays that can reach eyes from above or around glasses.
- **Even if you have contact lenses with UV protection, wear your sunglasses.**
- **When swimming, wear goggles.** They'll protect your eyes from the sun and from chlorine, which can make eyes red and puffy. If you swim in a lake or pond, bacteria can get under contact lenses and cause inflammation of the cornea.

If you have any problems with your eyes, see your eye doctor.

Eye Safety Begins at Home



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Half of vision injuries occur there, experts warn

Half of all eye injuries in the United States occur at home but are preventable, according to experts at the nonprofit group Prevent Blindness America.

From cleaning products to coat hangers, the average American home is rife with the potential for painful, blinding accidents. Americans can take simple steps, such as wearing appropriate eye protection, to protect their sight, however.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 219,000 Americans went to the emergency room for eye injuries in 2006. More than half of those injuries occurred at home.

Ninety percent of home eye injuries can be prevented by wearing safety goggles while doing lawn work, cleaning or working on the car, experts say. Safety goggles should have "ANSI Z-87" stamped on the lenses or frames. The stamp means they have been certified by the American National Standards Institute.

People should also wash their hands when they complete their chores before touching their eyes or face.

"When we perform the same chores or tasks around the house, week after week, we can get complacent about how quickly accidents can happen," Daniel D. Garrett, senior vice president of Prevent Blindness America, said in a prepared statement. "We all need to take extra care when we're at home to protect our sight and not wind up in the emergency room."

Prevent Blindness America has declared September "Home Eye Safety Awareness Month" in an effort to draw attention to everyday risks to vision.

Children are at special risk because of their "creative" use of ordinary household items such as coat hangers, glue and pencils. Prevent Blindness America offers the following tips to help kids learn eye-safe behaviors:

- Teach children not to run around with forks, knives, pencils, combs or toothbrushes.
- Keep detergents, cleaning supplies, nail polish remover, mouthwash and cosmetics in locked cabinets or out of reach.
- Keep clothes hangers hanging in the closet.
- Place nails, glue, screwdrivers and other tools out of children's reach.
- Keep younger kids away from work areas where power tools are in use.

Health Tip: Wear Eye Protection

Prevent injury during work and play



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Eye injuries can occur when you're playing sports, working with tools or chemicals, or even in the kitchen.

The U.S. National Safety Council says you should always wear eye protection when you are:

- Working with or around any type of chemical.
- Using tools to make repairs around the home.
- Playing any sport that involves a ball or other object that could strike your eye.
- You can protect your glasses or contact lenses with safety goggles.
- You should also always wear sunglasses when you're out in the sun.

Back-to-School Checklist: Immunization Changes

While the back-to-school supply list hasn't changed much over the years, immunization recommendations have. Find out what's changed this year and get your student up to date before school starts.

Changes to the recommended immunization schedule from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) include:

Varicella (chickenpox). The CDC and AAP now recommend each child get a second dose of the chickenpox vaccine between 4 and 6 years of age, for a total of two doses. Before, just one dose of the vaccine was recommended around age 1. Because a few kids vaccinated at age 1 still got chickenpox later on, a second dose is now recommended. Two doses of the vaccine are recommended for all older children, teens and adults who have never had chickenpox.

Meningococcal vaccine (MCV4). To protect against meningitis, a serious infection of the brain and spinal cord tissues, kids aged 11 to 12 should get a meningococcal vaccine (MCV4). Teens entering high school and college freshmen living in dorms should also be vaccinated if they haven't been already.

Flu shot yearly for all kids 6 months through 19 years of age. All kids in this age range should have a yearly flu shot to protect against the influenza (flu) virus. Two doses of flu shot are needed if the child has never had a flu shot before.

Human papilloma virus (HPV): three doses, for girls 11 to 12 years or older. This vaccine isn't required for school attendance, but if your daughter is having a back-to-school physical, HPV vaccination (Gardasil) will be offered. The HPV vaccine prevents human papilloma virus - the virus that causes cervical cancer and genital warts.

Finally, check with your doctor to see if your child's immunization schedule is up to date. Ask whether your child has had two doses of the measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine or is due for a tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis (Tdap) booster.

Don't forget the adults

While you're getting the kids ready for school, take care of yourself, too. Ask your doctor what immunizations you need, including the flu shot or booster shot for tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough.

Suggested Immunizations for Children

This article gives parents all the information they need about immunizations, including the latest recommendations from



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the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Making sure your child gets all the recommended vaccines is one of the most important ways to ensure your child's good health. Vaccines are also called immunizations. They protect children from a host of diseases, including many that are deadly.

Every year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other expert panels release new recommendations for childhood immunization schedules. The schedules change based on developments in vaccine research, disease outbreaks and other information.

With so many vaccines and yearly changes, it can be confusing for parents. That's why it's important to build a partnership with your pediatrician or family doctor. Your doctor can help keep your children up to date and keep copies of required immunization records.

Here is the most recent information from the CDC. These are in PDF form and can be printed.

Types of vaccines

Here is information about different vaccines that children should receive:

Chickenpox

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Chickenpox.** Chickenpox (varicella) is a common childhood disease. It is usually mild, but it can be serious, especially in young infants, teens, pregnant women and adults. Chickenpox causes a rash that turns into blisters with itching. Other common symptoms include fever and fatigue. It can lead to severe skin infection, scars, pneumonia, brain damage or death.

Diphtheria, tetanus, and acellular pertussis (DTaP)

Children should receive a series of these shots to protect against:

- **Diphtheria.** An infection of the throat that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and death.
- **Tetanus.** A potentially deadly illness that causes painful tightening of the muscles and locking of the jaw.
- **Pertussis.** Also called whooping cough, this disease causes the buildup of sticky, thick mucus in the windpipe. Whooping cough can lead to pneumonia and seizures.

Tetanus and diphtheria toxoid and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap)

Tetanus and diphtheria toxoid and pertussis vaccine is given as a booster for the diseases of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis that were mentioned above.

Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:



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- **Hepatitis A.** A viral disease that attacks the liver, causing flu-like symptoms, jaundice, nausea and stomach pains
- **Hepatitis B.** A viral disease that can cause acute short-term symptoms, such as loss of appetite, diarrhea and vomiting, jaundice, pain in muscles, joints and stomach, and fatigue. It can also lead to liver failure and liver cancer.

Haemophilus influenzae (Hib)

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Haemophilus influenzae (Hib).** This is a bacterial infection that can affect the brain, bloodstream, bones, joints, lungs and windpipe. Before the vaccine was developed, Hib was the most common cause of meningitis, a serious infection of the brain.

Measles, mumps and rubella

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Measles.** This is a highly contagious disease that can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death.
- **Mumps.** A viral infection characterized by swelling of the salivary glands near the neck. It can lead to deafness, meningitis, painful swelling of the testicles or ovaries and, rarely, death.
- **Rubella.** Also known as German measles, rubella is a viral illness that causes a rash, mild fever and arthritis (mostly in women). It can cause birth defects or miscarriage if a woman is infected during the first three months of her pregnancy.

Meningococcal

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Meningococcal infections.** These bacteria can cause a serious infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and blood (sepsis).

Pneumococcal

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Pneumococcal infections.** The pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and the blood (sepsis). The bacteria also cause ear infections.

Polio

Children should receive a series of vaccines to protect against:

- **Polio.** Polio is a viral disease that attacks the brain, spinal cord and central nervous system, causing paralysis and death.

Influenza vaccine (shot) or influenza vaccine (nasal spray)



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Children should receive a flu shot or inhaled vaccine each fall to protect against:

- **Influenza (flu).** Influenza (flu) is a viral illness seen in the winter that causes fever, cough and muscle aches. It can lead to pneumonia, and kills tens of thousands of people every year.

Human papillomavirus

Girls should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Human papillomavirus, or HPV.** The HPV vaccine offers protection from the viruses that cause genital warts and most cervical cancers.

Rotavirus

Children should receive a series of shots to protect against:

- **Rotavirus.** The rotavirus causes vomiting and watery diarrhea with fever and belly pain. Infection with the virus can lead to dangerous dehydration in children. Keep in mind that your baby can still get diarrhea from other germs. The rotavirus, though, commonly causes the most severe kind of stomach flu in babies.

Note: In the late 1990s a different type of rotavirus vaccine was used. This vaccine was found to be linked with an uncommon type of bowel obstruction called intussusception, and it was taken off the market. The new rotavirus vaccines have not been linked to intussusception.

Immunization schedules

Here are CDC charts detailing immunization schedules:

Recommended Immunization Schedule Ages newborn to 6 years

Link to: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/spec-grps/infants/downloads/parent-ver-sch-0-6yrs.pdf>

Recommended Immunization Schedule Ages 7 through 18 years

Link to: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/who/teens/downloads/parent-version-schedule-7-18yrs.pdf>

Teens May Be Missing Out on Needed Vaccines

Not getting preventive care biggest reason for immunization shortfall, study finds

Although most people think of young children when they hear about childhood vaccinations, adolescents need certain booster shots as well as new immunizations.

However, a recent study has found that not all teens are getting these necessary vaccinations.



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The study, published in the October issue of *Pediatrics*, found that nearly one-third of teens weren't up-to-date on their measles-mumps-rubella vaccination, another quarter were missing out on their hepatitis B protection, and 16 percent weren't fully immunized against tetanus and diphtheria.

"We found that adolescent immunization rates were low for adolescents 13 years old, and that missed opportunities to vaccinate were pretty common," said study author Dr. Grace Lee, an assistant professor in the departments of pediatrics, and ambulatory care and prevention at Harvard Medical School, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Children's Hospital of Boston.

Lee and her colleagues assessed immunization rates for almost 24,000 13-year-olds enrolled in two health plans. All of the children were born between 1986 and 1991.

They found that 84 percent of the teens were up-to-date on the tetanus-diphtheria vaccination, 74 percent had received hepatitis B vaccination and 67 percent were current on their measles-mumps-rubella immunization.

Lee said the study was conducted before three new vaccines became available for teens, and these new vaccines are: meningococcal, human papillomavirus (HPV), and pertussis.

Teens who had regular preventive care were more likely to be up-to-date on their vaccinations, but Lee said that doctors also missed opportunities to get adolescents current on their immunizations during acute care visits as well.

"I think doctors are more attuned to vaccinations at adolescent preventive visits, but adolescents don't seek preventive care yearly. They tend to go when they're sick. We could target adolescents for vaccination during acute care visits -- get them while you have them," said Lee.

"Babies and young children are much more likely to be fully immunized. That's why I really try to encourage parents to take adolescents for annual health-care visits," said Dr. Susan Coupey, chief of adolescent medicine at Children's Hospital of Montefiore and Albert Einstein College of Medicine, in New York City.

Coupey said it's especially important to bring kids in when they're 12 or 13 to make sure they're up-to-date on their immunizations and to ensure that their development is on track.

A second study, also in the October issue of *Pediatrics*, looked at the reasons that parents might delay or forgo immunizations for their children. The government researchers found that parents often delayed a vaccination due to illness. Another big reason parents felt unsure about vaccines, or delayed or refused a vaccine, was due to concerns about safety or side effects. The study found that many parents changed their minds after discussing their concerns with their doctors, however

Immunizations for Adults

Information about immunizations, including the latest recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Making sure you get all the recommended vaccines is one of the most important ways to ensure your good health. Vaccines, also called immunizations, protect you from a host of diseases, including many that are deadly.

Every year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other expert panels release new recommendations for adult immunization schedules. The schedules change each year based on developments in vaccine research, disease outbreaks and other information.

With so many vaccines and yearly changes, it can get confusing. That's why it's important to work in partnership with your family doctor. Your doctor can help keep your immunizations up to date and keep copies of your immunization records.



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Here is the most recent information from the CDC. These are in PDF form and can be printed.

Types of vaccines

Here is information about different types of vaccines you should get:

Tetanus, diphtheria (Td) or tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap)

Adults should get booster shots to protect against:

- **Tetanus.** A potentially deadly illness that causes painful tightening of the muscles and locking of the jaw.
- **Diphtheria.** An infection of the throat that can lead to breathing problems, paralysis, heart failure and death.
- **Pertussis.** Also called whooping cough, this disease causes the buildup of sticky, thick mucus in the windpipe. Whooping cough can lead to pneumonia and seizures.

Influenza vaccine (shot) or influenza vaccine (nasal spray)

Certain adults should get a flu shot or inhaled vaccine each fall to protect against:

- **Influenza (flu).** Influenza (flu) is a viral illness seen in the winter that causes fever, cough and muscle aches. It can lead to pneumonia, and kills tens of thousands of people every year.

Pneumococcal

Certain adults should get this vaccine to protect against:

- **Pneumococcal infections.** The pneumococcal bacteria can cause serious infections of the lungs (pneumonia), the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and the blood (sepsis).

Measles, mumps and rubella

Generally, anyone 18 years of age or older who was born after 1956 should get this vaccine to protect against:

- **Measles.** A highly contagious disease that can lead to pneumonia, seizures, brain damage and death.
- **Mumps.** A viral infection characterized by swelling of the salivary glands near the neck. It can lead to deafness, meningitis, painful swelling of the testicles or ovaries and, rarely, death.
- **Rubella.** Also known as German measles, rubella is a viral illness that causes a rash, mild fever and arthritis (mostly in women). It can cause birth defects or miscarriage if a woman is infected during the first three months of her pregnancy.

Some adults, including pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions, should not get this vaccine. Ask your doctor for details.

Chickenpox



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Adults who have not had chickenpox or the chickenpox vaccine should get this vaccine to protect against:

- **Chickenpox.** Chickenpox (varicella) is a common childhood disease. It is usually mild, but it can be serious, especially in young infants, teens, pregnant women and adults. Chickenpox causes a rash that turns into blisters with itching. Other common symptoms include fever and fatigue. It can lead to severe skin infection, scars, pneumonia, brain damage or death.

Some adults, including pregnant women and people with certain medical conditions, should not get this vaccine. Ask your doctor for details.

Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B

Some adults should get a series of shots to protect against:

- **Hepatitis A.** A viral disease that attacks the liver, causing flu-like symptoms, jaundice, nausea and stomach pains
- **Hepatitis B.** A viral disease that can cause acute short-term symptoms, such as loss of appetite, diarrhea and vomiting, jaundice, pain in muscles, joints and stomach, and fatigue. It can also lead to liver failure and liver cancer.

Meningococcal

Some adults should get this vaccine to protect against:

- **Meningococcal infections.** The meningococcal bacteria can cause a serious infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) and blood (sepsis).

Shingles (herpes zoster)

Some adults should get this vaccine to protect against:

- **Shingles.** This condition is caused by the herpes zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you've had chickenpox, the virus lies dormant (inactive) in your nerves. Later, often after decades, the virus may reactivate in the form of shingles.

Human papillomavirus

Some women should get a series of shots to protect against:

- **Human papillomavirus, or HPV.** The HPV vaccine offers protection from the viruses that cause most cases of genital warts and cervical cancers.

Immunization schedule

Here is the CDC chart detailing the adult immunization schedule:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/downloads/adult/mmwr-adult-schedule.pdf>

