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Eye Care Facts and Myths

Myth

1. Reading in dim light is harmful to your eyes.
2. It is not harmful to watch a welder or look at the sun if you squint, or look through narrowed eyelids.
3. Using a computer, or video display terminal (VDT), is harmful to the eyes.
4. If you use your eyes too much, you wear them out.
5. Wearing poorly-fit glasses damages your eyes.
6. Wearing poorly-fit contacts does not harm your eyes.
7. You do not need to have your eyes checked until you are in your 40s or 50s.
8. Safety goggles are more trouble than they're worth.
9. It's okay to swim while wearing soft contact lenses.
10. Children outgrow crossed eyes.
11. A cataract must be ripe before it can be removed.
12. Cataracts can be removed with lasers.
13. Eyes can be transplanted.
14. All eye care providers are the same.

Fact

1. Although reading in dim light can make your eyes feel tired, it is not harmful.
2. Even if you squint, ultra-violet light still gets to your eyes, damaging the cornea, lens and retina. Never watch welding without wearing the proper protection. Never look directly at an eclipse.
3. Although using a VDT is associated with eyestrain or fatigue, it is not harmful to the eyes.

4. You can use your eyes as much as you wish-they do not wear out.
5. Although a good glasses fit is required for good vision, a poor fit does not damage your eyes.
6. Poorly fit contact lenses can be harmful to your cornea (the window at the front of your eye). Make certain your eyes are checked regularly by your ophthalmologist if you wear contact lenses.
7. There are several asymptomatic, yet treatable, eye diseases (most notably glaucoma) that can begin prior to your 40s.
8. Safety goggles prevent many potentially blinding injuries every year. Keep goggles handy and use them!
9. Potentially blinding eye infections can result from swimming or using a hot tub while wearing contact lenses.
10. Children do not outgrow truly crossed eyes. A child whose eyes are misaligned has strabismus and can develop poor vision in one eye (a condition known as amblyopia) because the brain turns off the misaligned or “lazy” eye. The sooner crossed or misaligned eyes are treated, the less likely the child will have permanently impaired vision.
11. With modern cataract surgery, a cataract does not have to ripen before it is removed. When a cataract keeps you from doing the things you like or need to do, consider having it removed.
12. Cataracts cannot be removed with a laser. The cloudy lens must be removed through a surgical incision. However, after cataract surgery, a membrane within the eye may become cloudy. This membrane can be opened with laser surgery.
13. The eye cannot be transplanted. It is connected to the brain by the optic nerve, which cannot be reconnected once it has been severed. The cornea-the clear front part of the eye-can be transplanted. Surgeons often use plastic intraocular lens implants (IOL's) to replace natural lenses removed during cataract surgery.
14. An *ophthalmologist* is a medical doctor (M.D.) or doctor of osteopathy (D.O.), uniquely trained to diagnose and treat all disorders of the eye. An ophthalmologist is

qualified to perform surgery, prescribe and adjust eyeglasses and contact lenses, and prescribe medication.

15. An *optometrist* (O.D.) is not a medical doctor, but is specially trained to diagnose eye abnormalities, and prescribe, supply and adjust eyeglasses and contact lenses. In most states, optometrists can use drugs to treat certain eye disorders.
16. An *optician* fits, supplies, and adjusts eyeglasses and contact lenses. An optician cannot examine the eyes or prescribe eyeglasses or medication.