

# Look after your eyes



**Be active**



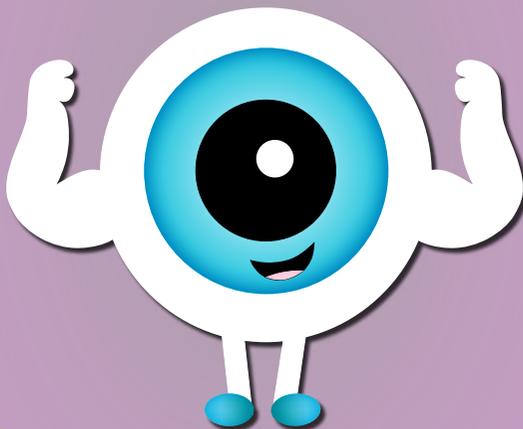
**Stop smoking**



**Eat healthily**



**Regular eye tests**



**Family history**



**Screen time breaks**



**Safety goggles**



**Sports goggles**



**Sunglasses**

**Tips to help keep your eyes in good shape**

# One in five of us will experience sight loss in our lifetime, but did you know most sight loss can be prevented?

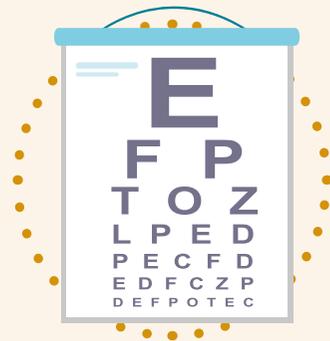
**This leaflet provides information on how you can help keep your eyes, and your sight, healthy.**

## Get your eyes tested regularly

Sight is the sense people say they fear losing the most, yet it is the one appointment they're most likely to miss, cancel or avoid.

You should have an eye test at least once every two years with your local optometrist (optician) - even if you have not experienced any change in your vision. An eye examination can often pick up the first signs of a sight loss condition before there are any symptoms. Detecting sight problems early improves your chances of getting treatment.

A routine eye test can also detect a range of serious or life-threatening conditions such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease.



### **Sudden eye problems?**

See your optometrist for a Northern Ireland Primary Eyecare Assessment and Referral Service (NIPEARS) assessment.

If you develop a sudden eye problem, for example a red eye, a sore eye, sudden change in vision, flashes or floaters or something in your eye that you cannot remove, contact your local optometrist. They can offer you an appointment within 48 hours to assess and manage your condition, usually at no cost.

# Safety first – protect your eyes

## Wear sunglasses

Protecting your eyes from the sun is very important as UVA and UVB rays in sunlight can harm your eyes and may increase the risk of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (AMD) (a common condition that affects the centre part of your vision).



Never look directly at the sun as this can cause irreversible damage to your eyesight and could lead to blindness.

Wearing sunglasses, glasses or contact lenses with a built-in UV filter will protect your eyes. Only buy sunglasses that have a CE mark or carry British Standard BS EN ISO 12312-1, which ensures you are getting the right level of UV protection. Wearing a wide brimmed hat will also help. For more visit [www.careinthesun.org](http://www.careinthesun.org)

## Avoid tanning beds

Tanning beds pose the same risks to your eyes and body as outdoor UV light. They can produce UV levels up to 100 times what you would get from the sun. This can cause serious

damage to the external and internal structures of the eye and eyelids.

## DIY – protect your eyes

DIY causes many eye injuries every year so always ensure you wear proper safety goggles or safety glasses. Make sure they:



- have a polycarbonate lens
- have a CE mark
- fit properly (including over your glasses if you wear them).

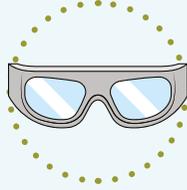
If you do get something in your eye, do not rub it. Instead, if suitable, pull your upper eyelid outwards and down over your lower eyelashes. This causes tears to flow, which should wash out your eye. If that doesn't work, wash out your eye with cold water or eye wash. If you cannot remove it contact your local optometrist who should be able to remove it for you.

If you have a very serious eye injury, such as glass in your eye or a deep cut, go directly to your nearest Emergency Department.

## Sport – give your eyes support

Many eye injuries are caused by moving objects and other factors during sports activities.

If you need them, always wear safety goggles (European Standard BS EN 166) or sports goggles to keep your eyes protected.



If you use a computer for long periods, help protect your eyes by:



- pausing and looking away from the screen regularly
- blinking your eyes regularly
- taking frequent short breaks
- stretching your head and neck
- adopting the 20-20-20 rule. Rest your eyes every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

If possible, try to work where there is good lighting but without light reflecting off the computer screen.

## Screen time

Staring at a computer, phone or tablet screen for long periods can cause headaches, itchy eyes, dry eyes, eye discomfort or pain and difficulty focusing at a distance.

## Healthy lifestyle

### Stop smoking

Smokers are much more likely than non-smokers to develop AMD and cataracts. In fact, smoking doubles the risk of AMD which is the UK's most common cause of sight loss.

Stopping smoking is not easy but there are hundreds of free stop smoking services across Northern Ireland, run by specially trained staff who can advise you on the best way

to stop smoking. Find out more at [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)



## Eat healthily and be active

Being obese can increase the risk of developing high blood pressure and/or diabetes, which in turn can cause sight loss.

Try to include green leafy vegetables (such as spinach, kale and broccoli) and fish that are high in omega -3 fatty acids (such as mackerel and salmon) in your diet. This may help delay the progression of conditions such as cataracts and AMD.



Lack of physical activity contributes significantly to several eye conditions, particularly if you're aged 60 or over.

Physical activity may help reduce the risk of sight loss from narrowing or hardening of the arteries, high blood pressure and diabetes.



For more on eating well and getting active go to [www.choosetolivebetter.com](http://www.choosetolivebetter.com)

## People at greater risk of eye disease

Some people are at greater risk of developing sight problems. Regular eye tests are particularly important if you are:

- over 60 years of age
- from a certain ethnic group – for example, people from African-Caribbean communities are at greater risk of glaucoma and diabetes, and people from South Asian communities are at a greater risk of diabetes (diabetic retinopathy, where the retina becomes damaged, is a common complication of diabetes)

- someone with a learning disability
- from a family with a history of eye disease. Many eye conditions can run in families, from long and short sightedness to more serious conditions, such as glaucoma. Knowing if someone in your family has sight problems can help detect a condition before it becomes serious.



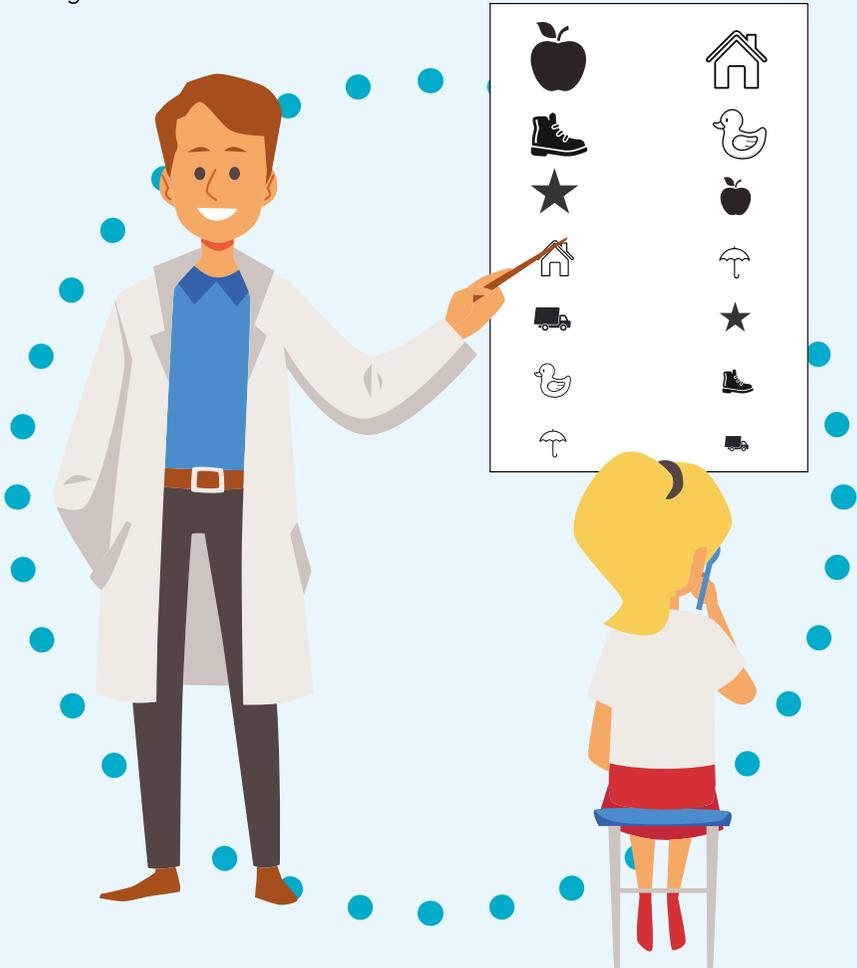
## Children's eye health

Children don't normally complain if they have problems with their sight, but there may be signs that they are not able to see properly. Such as:

- sitting close to the TV
- holding objects very close to their face
- blinking a lot

- rubbing their eyes
- one eye turning in or out.

If you think your child is having any problems with their sight, take them to an optometrist for further investigation. Children, like adults, should have their eyes tested regularly.



## Don't delay, book an appointment today

If you have not had an eye test for more than two years don't put it off. Book an appointment with your local optometrist (optician) as soon as possible. If your vision has changed and needs corrected always wear your glasses or contact lenses as recommended by your optometrist.



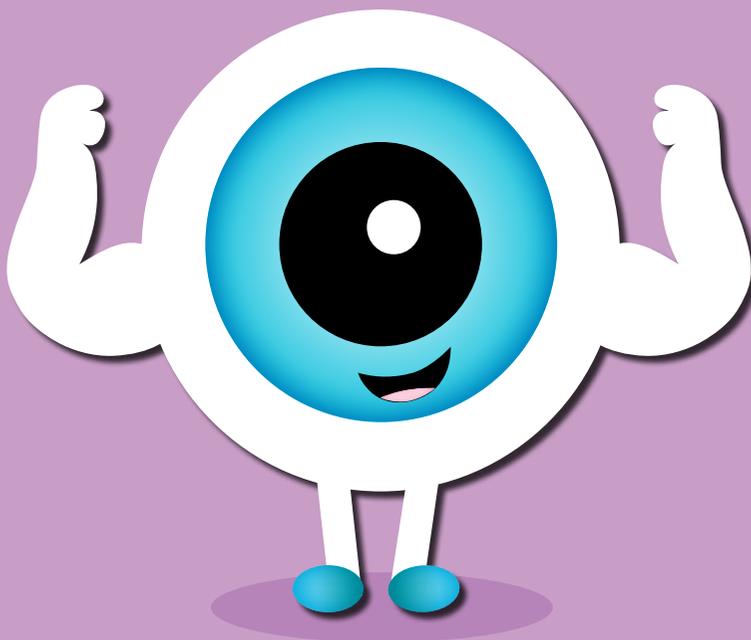
If you are concerned about the cost of an eye test you may be eligible for help.

Telephone the Health and Social Care Information Line on 0800 587 8982 (free) or visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/eye-care](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/eye-care)

For further information on eye health scan the QR code or visit: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/eye-health](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/eye-health)



Remember, you can always speak to your pharmacist and receive treatment where appropriate for common eye complaints such as minor infections, allergies, and dry eyes.



#EyecareWeCare



**Public Health Agency**  
12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.  
Tel: 0300 555 0114 (local rate).  
[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

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A large print accessible Word version of this leaflet is available online at [www.pha.site/Living-Well](http://www.pha.site/Living-Well)