

DOCTORS ORDERS by Robin Roy | Staff Writer

Five tips to keep your eyesight sharp

Everyone has heard that he should get yearly checkups from the family doctor, and that he needs to visit the dentist every six months. But do you know how often you should get an eye exam?

The answer: at least once every two years — if you're under 70.

Nonetheless, it may be easy to overlook the eyes, but ophthalmologist Dr. Michael Lamensdorf of the Eye Specialists of Sarasota says he's found people are pretty good about taking care of their vision.

Still, Lamensdorf has five tips for consumers to help them maintain good eyesight.

1 Wear sunglasses

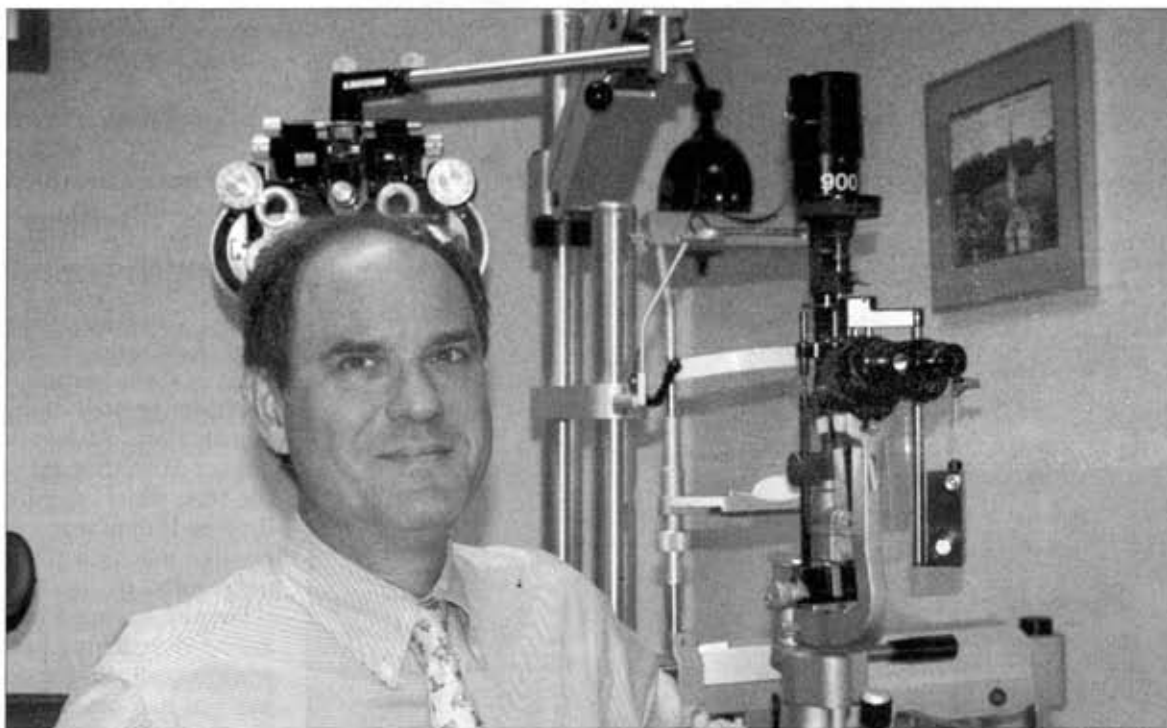
Extended exposure to the Sun's UV rays can cause a good deal of damage to the cornea. But an added benefit to sunglasses doesn't even directly affect the eyeball. Lamensdorf says skin cancer is most common on the skin surrounding the eyes, something sunglasses can help prevent.

2 Use artificial tears

Oils that protect the eyes thicken over time. Artificial tears, which are different than plain eye drops, used a few times a day can delay the drying out of the eyes.

3 Wash face in direction of lashes

Because the eyelashes work as a filter to keep dirt and dust out of your eyes, washing your face in the direction of your lashes will keep foreign material out of your eyes.



Dr. Michael Lamensdorf: "Too many people sleep in their contacts."

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4 Take your vitamins

Vitamins A, E, C and Zinc are anti-oxidants, which have been shown to slow macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness.

5 Get regular eye exams

Those under 70 years of age should get your vision checked every two years. Those over 70 should see an eye doctor every year. Diabetics should get an eye exam every year regardless of age.

Lamensdorf has special advice for parents: "They should take their kids to an eye specialist before (they attend) school," he says. Poor vision can be hereditary. "If parents wear glasses themselves, kids especially should be checked," he said.

Lamensdorf warns contact lens users to treat them responsibly. "Too many people sleep in their contacts," he says. "Even when they're designed for sleep, obey the rules." Leaving lenses in too long could lead to a serious infection.

Because of the high number of senior citizens in Sarasota County, Lamensdorf

says cataracts are a particular problem here. But he says there's a new technology that makes cataract surgery better than ever. They're called ReStor lenses. They've only been around for about 18 months.

ReStor employs a different way of putting lenses together. It's the same optical technology the Hubble Telescope uses.

Patient William Bankauf says his cataracts were increasing rapidly. But since getting ReStor surgery, "I have perfect focus. I can read tiny sugar packets, and my friends are amazed."

EYE CARE FACT OR FICTION

Sitting close to TV damages vision

Fiction: It may cause headaches, but won't hurt eyesight.

Reading in dark weakens vision

Fiction: Same as television. May cause headaches only.

Glasses and contacts worsen vision

Fiction: A prescription changes due to aging or diabetes, not because of corrective lenses

Carrots improve sight

Fact: The vitamin A in carrots, and other foods, promotes good vision.