

Your EYES CENTER

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Spring 2010



It's the SNEEZING SEASON

For those of us with seasonal allergies, the pollen count isn't necessary for us to know when spring has arrived. Our eyes—red, itchy, watery, swollen eyes—often are the first harbingers of spring.

Called seasonal allergic conjunctivitis, or SAC, the symptoms can be miserable. It starts when pollen or other allergens trigger swelling in the blood vessels in the conjunctiva, the membrane inside the eyelid. The eyes become red and the eyelids become swollen. Sometimes the eyes look watery, a condition called “chemosis,” and can become itchy, painful, and sensitive to light.

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Avoiding exposure to the allergens is one of the best ways to reduce your SAC symptoms. That includes staying indoors during the peak pollen times of early morning and late afternoon, but that's not often practical.

Some simple home remedies to soothe allergy eyes include cold compresses on the eyes and rinsing the eyes with tear substitutes.

Prescription and over-the-counter medications for allergic conjunctivitis include oral antihistamines and eyedrops that come in two forms: decongestant eyedrops and decongestant/antihistamine combinations. We advise caution when using any eyedrop that contains a decongestant, since long-term use can cause a rebound effect and dependence on its use.

Ask us about the relatively new ketotifen eyedrops that are expected to be less likely to cause the rebound effect after extended use.

Itchy eyes *Causes and treatments*

While itchiness is the most common symptom of eye allergies, not all itchy eyes are caused by allergies.

The common cold, with its array of unpleasant symptoms, including headache, sneezing, aching, and congestion, can also cause itchy eyes. Cool compresses and over-the-counter eyedrops can help provide some relief.

Itchy, red eyes with discharge may be the result of conjunctivitis, commonly called pinkeye, a highly contagious bacterial or viral illness.

Unlike colds and seasonal eye allergies that are soothed by cool compresses, pinkeye pain is helped by *warm* compresses. Use a warm, moist cloth to remove discharge, wiping away from the eye to avoid spreading the infection. Antibiotic drops or ointment may be prescribed if the pinkeye is bacterial.

Itching, redness, pain, or rapid swelling around one eye could be symptomatic of periorbital cellulitis, a potentially serious infection that requires immediate medical attention. In some cases, the infection can spread to the brain. Causes include bug bites, sinusitis, and spread of other infections, including impetigo and tear-duct infections. Treatment usually involves antibiotics. Contact us right away if you suspect you or a family member has these symptoms.

Thank you for all your referrals. We appreciate them!

Pick the right SUNGLASSES

One easy way to improve your golf game this season may be to change your sunglasses. The right eyewear can improve your view of the course and eliminate distractions that can impact your score.

First, there's the fit. Flexible, wraparound-style shields that cover your peripheral vision can reduce or eliminate glare. Glare that bounces off the sides and back of standard frames can tire the eyes and reduce visual acuity. Wraparounds also protect the sides of your eyes from wind and debris.

Make sure that your wraparound sunglasses hug your head with proper nose pads and temples that fit snugly and comfortably so they don't slip when you swing or fall down when you putt. Ask about comfort-cable temples or spring-hinged temples.

Next, pick the right lens. Polarized lenses cut the glare and provide maximum protection from harmful UVA and UVB rays. Polycarbonate lenses are lightweight and impact resistant, giving you a safety advantage.

Lens tint is especially important. When playing in bright sunlight, a grey-green lens tint with a low visible light transmission (VLT) measurement enhances contrast, allowing the ball to visually "pop" off the background and provide better contour recognition. Simply put, you can read the greens better. In overcast or partly cloudy conditions, a lens with an amber tint and a higher VLT will enhance your visual acuity.

Before you dust off your spikes and clean your clubs, stop in for a sunglass checkup to make sure you're seeing and looking your best on the course.



Rubbed the wrong way

A baby's fingernail. A hairbrush. A grain of sand. A tree branch.

These are just a few causes of scratches to the surface of the eye, called corneal abrasions. Whether the scratch results from a poke in the eye or from rubbing the eye when a foreign body is present, corneal abrasions can be painful and cause severe sensitivity to light.

If something has scratched your eye, it's very important to call us right away for an exam or, in an urgent situation, seek treatment in an emergency room.

Scratches can make your eye susceptible to infection from bacteria or a fungus. In some cases, there is a risk of blindness, especially if whatever scratched your eye is dirty or contaminated.

Don't rub a scratched eye, and don't patch your eye. Bacteria thrive in dark, warm places, and a patch might provide the ideal environment. Simply keep your eye closed, or loosely tape a paper cup or eye shield over it. Then see your doctor as soon as possible.

Minor surface scratches may need only simple monitoring after an initial visit to make sure complications or infections don't occur.

Other eye injuries, such as deep puncture wounds from accidents, may require immediate treatment or surgery to prevent permanent eye damage resulting in vision loss.

Remember to use commonsense precautions such as wearing safety goggles to prevent eye injuries when in situations that may present hazards to the eyes.



EYE-CARE TIPS *for travelers*

Getting ready for a getaway? Remember to pack for your eyes. Of course, you'll take along your eyeglasses or contact lenses if you need vision correction, but don't forget the little extras that can make travel easier on your eyes.

Take tears

Pack one or two bottles of artificial tears to combat the dryness caused by air-conditioned hotel rooms; low-humidity, pressurized airplane cabins; smoky restaurants; and prolonged snoozing (a drop or two in each eye before you nod off will refresh your eyes when you awake). Remember to take a 3-ounce or smaller travel size in a zip-top plastic bag in your carry-on luggage if you're traveling by air to conform to security screening guidelines for liquids.

Take extras

A spare pair of eyeglasses, sunglasses, or extra disposable contact lenses can save you time and money when traveling. Who wants to spend their travel time hunting for an eye doctor or optical shop?

If you wear contacts, pack sterile multipurpose solution, rewetting drops, and a clean contact lens case for maximum eye health and comfort. Your brand may not be readily available at your destination.

For an extra measure of security, ask us for a copy of your prescription to tuck in with your travel documents. If you do need glasses or contacts in a hurry, you'll have all the necessary information.

Take care

Some simple pretravel maintenance can prevent some on-the-road headaches. Before you leave home...

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect your contact lenses with a multipurpose solution.
- Clean your eyeglasses, tighten the screws, and take along nonscratching, lens-cleaning wipes.
- Get a pretrip eye checkup if you are experiencing an eye condition, and ask us what you should do to monitor the condition and what to do if it worsens.
- If you plan to snorkel or dive, consider getting a facemask in your eyeglass prescription so that your view of the underwater world is as crisp as your vision on land.



Translate your EYEGLASS Rx

Optometrists worldwide use a standard format to write eyeglass prescriptions. Here's how to "break the code":

- **OD** means right eye, a Latin abbreviation for *oculus dexter*.
- **OS** means left eye, the Latin abbreviation for *oculus sinister*.
- **D**, or **diopter**, is the measurement of the optical power of your corrective lens.
- **S**, or **sphere**, the first number in an eyeglass prescription, is the strength or power of your corrective lens measured in diopters. The higher the power, the stronger the prescription.
 - + Indicates farsightedness
 - Indicates nearsightedness
- **C**, or **cylinder**, measures the amount of astigmatism.
- **A**, or **axis**, is the location or angle on the eyeball of the astigmatism, measured in degrees.
- **ADD** is used in bifocal prescriptions to indicate the near-distance strength needed.
- Sometimes an eyeglass prescription is written using abbreviations, like this:

OD S +1.75D, C -1.25D, A x180, ADD +1.00D

Or simply as a string of numbers, like this:

OD +1.75 -1.25 x180 +1.00

In these examples, the prescription is for a bifocal lens for the right eye, which is farsighted with astigmatism and includes a 1-diopter increase in power in the lower portion of the eyeglass to improve near vision.

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GET OUT!

*More time outside
may reduce myopia*

Results from two research studies show that children who spend more time outdoors can lower their risk of becoming nearsighted (or myopic).

In studying schoolchildren who are at high risk for nearsightedness because both parents are nearsighted, Australian and American researchers found that when the

kids spent two-to-three hours outside during daylight hours, they had only a slightly greater risk of nearsightedness than children without myopic parents.

The critical factor seems to be the amount of time spent outdoors in daylight, regardless of the activity. Sports and physical exercise, and more passive activities, were equally beneficial as long as they took place outside.

Researchers believe this happens because of "lesser accommodative demands" in outdoor environments. In other words, the eyes don't have to work as hard shifting between near and far images. It could be because the eye's pupil narrows in the bright outdoor light, resulting in greater depth of focus. Or it could be the result of the exposure to outdoor light, which causes the release of a chemical inside the eye that could influence eye development.

While this provocative research is sure to result in further studies to better understand the results, it is certainly worth considering in a time when so many children are spending their out-of-school time indoors in front of computers or televisions.

The information included in this newsletter is not intended as a substitute for personal, professional advice.
For your specific situation, please consult our office.