Back to School Eye Care

It's that time of year - back to school. Along with shopping for new clothes and stocking up on school supplies, it's the perfect time to make a comprehensive eye exam appointment with your child’s eye doctor.

Kids learn through their eyes. Healthy vision is critical for them to read, write, see the chalkboard or computer, and even to play. If your child can't see well, they can have trouble learning and their grades might fall. Signs of an eye problem aren't always obvious but might include:

- Rubbing their eyes frequently
- Squinting or blinking a lot
- Frequent headaches due to eye strain
- Tilting their head to one side
- Covering up one eye to see
- Holding a book close to their face

Kids may get a check at school called "vision screening." It can tell if your child is likely to have problems, but it may not be able to diagnose them. The most common eye problems in kids are blurred vision (refractive errors), crossed eyes (strabismus), and lazy eye (amblyopia). A regular eye exam can catch these problems early, even before you or your child notices anything wrong. An untreated vision problem can lead to future issues that may be harder to treat. So help your children have a successful school year by scheduling a comprehensive eye exam today!

Board inSight

Q&A with FLEC Board Member Larry DeArmond

Larry DeArmond, Board Member and Treasurer, is the retired CFO and partner at Catalyst Equity Group, a Certified Public Accountant and graduate of Wichita State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting. Larry shares with us some of his insights...

Q What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish as a FLEC Board Member?
Contribute to personnel, systems, and procedure to ensure continuity of services for the organization.

Q What do you think is your best attribute
Q What do you bring to FLEC?
IT and Financial systems installation and implementation.

Q What do you see in the future for FLEC?
Consistent growth in services provided.

Q What is the best piece of advice you've ever given?
Be patient and persistent in developing your life plan.

Q If you could meet one person (Dead or alive) who would it be?
Ronald Reagan.

Q Do you have any skills or talents that most people don't know about?
Carpentry amateur. I built a greenhouse on our property in Tennessee.

Q What's your favorite hobby?
Maintaining 60 acres in the hills south of Nashville.

Q What's the one thing you can't live without?
Family.

Visit our Website

Car Donations

The Florida Lions Eye Clinic has partnered with the Naples Auto Donation Center (NADC) to help support the underserved population of Southwest Florida in need of eye care. NADC will accept tax deductible auto donations, at no cost to the donor, and will pick up, make minor repairs, detail and sell the donated vehicles as well as facilitate all paperwork, titles and IRS Form 1098-C for tax deductions.
“What a ‘win-win’ for everyone,” said Robin Goldstone Garcia, Executive Director of FLEC. “NADC makes the entire process simple and seamless to the donor and to the Clinic. After any needed repairs, they sell the car at an affordable price, with half of the proceeds supporting the non-profit of choice. How much simpler can it be?”

For car donors, NADC will arrange for a convenient time to have the car dropped off at their facility or will arrange to have it towed. The donor will then receive a receipt for the vehicle releasing them from all liability of the vehicle. For those looking for affordable used vehicles, NADC is a great option. All donated vehicles are inspected, receive minor repairs and are sold to our community at very reasonable prices. There are no dealer fees or commissions added to the price.

Potential car donors, or buyers, can contact NADC directly on their website at www.nadckids.com or by calling 239-692-9840.

When Collins Vision founder, Dr. Michael J. Collins, learned that the Florida Lions Eye Clinic, one of the United Way’s partner agencies, had a backlog of underserved individuals needing cataract surgery, he didn’t hesitate to step up.

Collins Vision has always enjoyed a strong alliance with United Way and is using this relationship to help individuals in need of some additional support at this time. “We tell our patients that we can’t wait for them to See the Difference, and with this partnership, we are able to Be the Difference our community needs at this time,” said Dr. Collins. “For seniors who have been living with reduced vision, cataract surgery is life-changing! We firmly believe restored vision should be accessible to everyone, so it is our honor to help individuals who do not have medical insurance or a way to pay for cataract surgery.”

Collins Vision’s newest eye surgeon Dr. Jason Friedrichs shares Dr. Collins’ philosophy of caring for every patient with sincerity and compassion. He was very excited to step in and perform these cataract procedures. “I am so impressed by everything Collins Vision stands for and the culture of giving back that Dr. Collins has created over the years,” said Dr. Friedrichs. “It’s an honor to be such an integral part of this much-needed and meaningful service to the community.”

With the help of practices like Collins Vision, the Florida Lions Eye Clinic is able to help individuals at no cost to them. Along with the eye surgeries performed in the clinic, many more are referred to practices like Collins Vision, which provide medical care, prescription medications, surgeries and glasses for individuals in need.

The Florida Lions Eye Clinic, the United Way and Collins Vision are committed to serving the communities of Southwest Florida in meaningful ways.
Every Shell Has A Story

Research has shown that there is definitely a strong link between “positivity” and health. At the clinic, the FLEC staff feels a positive attitude can help heal the mind and body, so they have started a little project to harness the power of positive thought called *Positivity Shells*!

Caring...Gratitude...Awesome...Imaginative...Fearless

Here in beautiful Southwest Florida we are so lucky to have such an abundance of these little treasures from the sea. So why not take advantage of this delightful resource to help spread some positivity among our patients. Staff and volunteers will collect the shells (a relaxing activity in itself) then use these shells to display words of positive thinking. The positivity shells will then be available to all patients. Just another way to help patients feel more welcomed and comfortable.

If you are a shell seeker, please feel free to donate some of your littles beauties to the clinic!

In the Eye of the Beholder

This past month, the FLEC staff has taken steps to create a patient friendly environment at the Clinic. Most people don’t enjoy visiting the doctor’s office, so why not promote a friendly and relaxed atmosphere to help patients feel more welcomed and comfortable. First, in July we received an amazing donation of office furniture from Oscar Castillo, husband of the Clinic Supervisor, Olivia Pena. Previously, the chairs in our patient waiting room were folding, white plastic, but now our patients can relax on comfortable, upholstered chairs.

Then, to beautify the clinic even more, some original photography, taken by our own Dr. Richard Shapiro, now hangs on the Clinic
The second was shot in India, at an open market in 2008. While walking down a side street, Dr. Shapiro came across a bright yellow cart piled high with wrist bracelets, waiting for vendors to bring the colorful bangles to market. The photographer in him knew it would make an interesting photo!

Of course, not to be forgotten, the wonderful paintings by Dr. Cinotti that already adorn the Clinic walls. How lucky FLEC is to have such talent! What an inspiring way to welcome our patients.

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**Pre-Diabetes and Eye Care**

*Contributed by Dr. Tim Diegel, FLEC Medical Director*

Diabetic changes in the eye include early cataracts and significant retinal changes that often cause visual loss to various degrees. In fact, diabetes is the primary cause of blindness in adults ages 20 to 74, and now newer cases of diabetes are occurring in youth and adolescence. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that in the U.S. every 1 in 10 youth has diabetes and 1 in 3 have pre-diabetes. The rates increase with age. A major problem is that there are no symptoms or warnings for pre-diabetes other than a family history. Everyone should get a test for their blood sugar level and be aware of ways to prevent and treat elevated blood sugars.

A primary care physician often checks a patient’s blood sugar (glucose) level at least annually. The glucose level is related to carbohydrate food intake.
Generally, one should limit carbs and increase fiber. A fasting (12 hours) glucose level below 100 is considered normal. The term “pre-diabetes” is the level of 100-125. A level 126 or above is in the diabetic range. The American Diabetic Association predicts that 70% of pre-diabetics will develop diabetes. Exercise uses up glucose in the body and decreases its blood level. This effect can last for hours. It recommended to exercise for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. If you can’t do that, at least try not to sit for many hours. You can use up some of the blood glucose by just moving and being active.

When you eat food with sugar (glucose), there is a surge causing a higher level of glucose in the blood. The pancreas is then stimulated to decrease this high level by secreting insulin, which protects the cells of the body from high glucose. You should be aware of this mechanism and try to decrease the need for the pancreas to secret excessive amounts of insulin. Think of it this way, the body has a set amount of insulin to be used during one’s life so it is prudent to use it slowly without surges. When insulin is no longer, diabetes is the result. This risk comes with increasing age. Eating less snacks keeps the pancreas from secreting insulin and feeling “starved” at times gives the pancreas a rest. Melatonin is a hormone that prepares the body for sleep at night, about 3-4 hours before sleep. Recently it has been discovered that melatonin has an effect on the pancreas that prevents the secretion of insulin. This means if a person has a late dessert or a dish of ice cream before bedtime, the surge of glucose does not bring insulin into the blood. The glucose level will stay high during the night - a high risk for eventual diabetes.

The bacteria in the colon (microbiome), which changes frequently, controls what we eat. Our cravings for food types are related to the types of the microbiome. That is why we may have cravings for sweets at certain times of the day (most have it in the evenings) that are difficult to fight. A decision to suddenly stop the sweets will cause withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, irritability, etc. A gradual decrease in sweets will work but may take 2-4 weeks. Keep at it!

Some easy steps that everyone can do to decrease the risk of pre-diabetes and help diabetes are:

1. Avoid processed foods which contain excessive sugars and carbs. These include what are in bags (chips) and boxes (crackers and cookies).
2. Increase fiber in the diet - it counteracts the effects of glucose.
3. Avoid snacks between meals (especially with sugar) to keep the blood glucose levels low as possible and give the pancreas a needed rest.
4. Avoid desserts if it’s not a special occasion.
5. It’s good to feel “starved” at times to keep your blood glucose is low.
6. Avoid sweets 3-4 hours before bed.
7. If you make a batch of cookies (for yourself or for your doctor), don’t eat a 1/2 dozen immediately to avoid a surge. Spread them out over a period of hours.
8. A researcher who wears a continuous glucose monitor found that eating protein (cheese/meat) before sweets has the effect of limiting the high glucose. No study has confirmed it.
Time to Hydrate!

Keeping your body hydrated is essential for your good health, but hydration is equally important for your eyes. Without adequate moisture, your eyes become dry and uncomfortable. Here are some tips to keeping your eyes moist and comfortable.

- If you are prone to dry eyes, use artificial tears, but look for brands that contain no preservatives.
- Remember to blink when you use your computer, read or play video games. Take a break at least every hour to prevent dry eyes.
- Use a humidifier in your home during the fall and winter to keep the air moist.
- Stay away from cigarette smoke, which tends to dry out your eyes.
- Wear wraparound sunglasses to protect your eyes from the wind and reduce tear evaporation.
- Drink eight to 10 glasses of water every day to keep your entire body hydrated.
- Buy an air filtration system for your home to remove dust that can irritate and dry your eyes.
- Turn down the thermostat. Hot rooms can dry out your eyes.

Amazon Smile is a simple way for you to support the Florida Lions Eye Clinic every time you shop, at no cost to you. It’s easy, just enter smile.amazon.com, and Amazon will ask you to select a charity of your choice.

You’ll find the exact same low prices, selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added benefit that AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the Florida Lions Eye Clinic. Amazon Smile is also available on the Amazon Shopping app on your phone. You can find it in the App Store for iOS or Google Play for Android.