Protect Your Precious Peepers

Did you know that nearly half of reported eye injuries happen in the home? If you are not careful, activities such as home repairs, yard work, cleaning and cooking can cause eye injuries. It takes less than a second to cause a life-altering injury to your eyes that could damage or steal your sight. Experts say proper protective eyewear could prevent up to 90 percent of all eye injuries. To make sure that you don’t suffer from a preventable eye injury, make it a priority to buy and wear a pair of protective safety glasses.

Your household should have at least one pair of ANSI-approved protective eyewear with "ANSI Z87.1" marked on the lens or frame. This means it meets the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z87.1 safety standard. You can purchase protective eyewear at most hardware or big box stores.

Wear eye protection if the activity involves hazardous chemicals or other substances that could damage your eyes, flying debris or other small particles, or projectiles that could fly into the eyes unexpectedly. Bottom line: use common sense, especially if there are children around. You should protect them and set an example by making a smart choice.

Safety eyewear is the best defense against eye injuries. They protect your eyes from a multitude of potential hazards at home and outdoors. The best way to preserve your vision is to safeguard it.

Board inSight

Q&A with FLEC Board Member Richard Corea

Richard Corea, OD is new to the FLEC board this year. He has a Doctor of Optometry from The Ohio State University, and is a retired Senior Staff Optometrist from Johns Hopkins University, School of Medicine. Richard shares with us some of his insights...

Q What is the most important thing you hope to accomplish as a FLEC Board Member?
To continue to build on the tremendous accomplishments of FLEC. We can do that by increasing the number of people we serve,
Q What do you think is your best attribute you bring to FLEC?
My experience both in administration, and in the field of eye care.

Q What do you see in the future for FLEC?
I think the future of the clinic is very bright, based on the accomplishments of the past few years. It’s a tremendous resource in complementing the goals of the Lions Club. The clinic will continue to bring high quality eye care to where it is most needed.

Q If you were a superhero, what would your superpower be?
I’m Sleep Man! I can close my eyes for 20 minutes, and wake up as refreshed as after an 8 hour sleep. With my trusty side kick Nap Boy, we patrol the area, doing good.

Q If you could meet one person (dead or alive) who would it be?
I would need it to be two people, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. I would need to ask them how they saved Western civilization.

Q What is the one thing, you can’t live without?
Books. Even with eight years of college without reading extensively, my education would be incomplete.

Q Where is the best place you’ve traveled to and why?
Vienna, Austria. It’s just so darn civilized.

FLEC Elects New Board Officers!

FLEC is pleased to announce the election of new officers to its board of directors. Elena Gonzalez, Esq, past Secretary, will now take on the role of President, replacing Noreen Thomas, EdD, who will now take on the role of Secretary. Director Dawn Lieb has been selected to be the new Vice President while Larry DeArmond will remain the Treasurer for another term.

“It’s an exciting time to be leading this nonprofit Board and a privilege to support an organization that provides quality eye care for those with need in our community,” said Ms. Gonzalez. “We have a tremendous team at the Clinic and an experienced and dedicated Board of Directors. I am incredibly proud of our accomplishments so far and am confident in our future as we continue to grow and expand our impact.”

“I am excited for what the future holds under Elena’s leadership,” said Robin Goldstone Garcia, Executive Director of FLEC. “She brings a wealth of experience and will be vital in our ability to scale and meet the growing
Eye Charts and What They Reveal

When you visit the eye doctor for a checkup, you may be asked to read an eye chart. The chart measures your visual acuity, or sharpness of vision. Various types of eye charts are available. Some use pictures or patterns, while others use letters. However, the Snellen eye chart is the most common, and the most recognizable. Dutch eye doctor Hermann Snellen developed the Snellen eye chart in the 1860s.

The Snellen chart usually shows 11 rows of capital letters. The first line has one very large letter. Each row after that has increasing numbers of letters that are smaller in size. To use the chart, you stand 20 feet away, cover one eye and read out the smallest line of letters you can see. The test is done on each eye.

If you have 20/20 vision, you are considered to have normal visual acuity. The top number is your distance in feet from the chart. The bottom number is the distance at which a person with normal eyesight can read the same line. For example, if you have 20/30 vision, it means your vision is worse than average. Twenty feet away, you can read letters most people see from 30 feet. Eye charts do not help the eye doctor tell whether you have an eye disease such as glaucoma or a problem with your retina. They also do not measure other vision problems such as loss of peripheral (side) vision.

Age Related Macular Degeneration

Contributed by Dr. Tim Diegel, FLEC Medical Director

This month Dr. Robert Sherman will be starting to perform eye injections
for retinal diseases in our clinic which mainly will be for Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD).

The macula is the center of the retina which is the nerve fiber layer covering the inside of the back of the eye. This center part gives the 20/20 vision. Macular Degeneration has for decades been divided into two types - wet and dry. The wetness is from leakage of the retinal blood vessels. The dry type is a gradual deterioration that occurs. The wet type was the most serious type in the past and has led to central blindness. A new drug was approved by the FDA in June of 2006 for injection into the eye for this wet type. The drug is now very successful for many patients although the injections have to be repeated every few months. It is now the standard treatment which will be available at the Florida Lions Eye Clinic for our patients.

There are 3 risk factors for developing ARMD, each related to having less macular pigment in the macula. The macula has a fatty yellow pigment material composed of lutein and zeaxanthin. This material is considered to be a protective layer for the macula during a person’s life. Having less of this pigment material increases the chances of developing age related macular degeneration. The first risk factor is smoking. Smokers have less of this protective pigment. Second, a family history of macular degeneration related to the thinness of the pigment layer and third, advancing age causes the macular pigment to become thinner.

In 2001, the National Eye Institute did a study which showed a certain combination of vitamins and minerals, combined with lutein and zeaxanthin, slowed the progression of ARMD in patients. The patients that had the most improvement were those with a history of poor dietary habits, a lack of vegetables and generally poor nutrition. Presumably they benefited most because they were the most deficient. Presently this approved combination is on the market and called the AREDS Vitamins (Age-Related Eye Disease Study). Some wonder how readily the ingredients are absorbed in this form as it travels through the body. Oftentimes the doctor’s office doesn’t talk about diet or how diet might even be better in some ways to help ARMD.

A person’s family history and specifically their genetic makeup may be protective against ARMD or make the individual more prone to develop it. It is thought that a specific gene (APOE gene) may affect the transport of the lipid pigments to the macula in the retina. It is possible that a bad gene can be modified by diet and environmental factors.

Many eye offices recommend the AREDS vitamins and don’t give much other detailed information regarding diet which can include lutein and zeaxanthin. These are transported in the blood by lipo (fat) - proteins throughout the body. Some vegetables which contain these two important substances include avocados, dark green vegetables such as spinach (especially cooked), broccoli, kale, peas, sweet peppers (especially red), and other colorful vegetables.

Studies have been also done on chicken
eggs. Lutein and zeaxanthin are in high concentrations in egg yolks and are more “bio-available” than in vegetables because of the lipid (fat) matrix of the egg yolk. They are absorbed and transported easily to the eye. It has been shown that eating one egg a day for 5 weeks significantly increases the concentration of lutein and zeaxanthin in the body without increasing the cholesterol level in the body.

So, diet is very important in addition to the AREDs capsule. This capsule also contains other elements such as Zinc that helps the retina. In fact, in preventing and treating ARMD, diet may be as important as any medication. Indeed, food IS medicine when it is carefully chosen, so it is wise to eat a very significant amount of the recommended foods. Since one never can tell how much is being absorbed and producing the desired effect, eating large amounts is prudent and can make a difference in prevention and in treatment of ARMD.

Consult your own eye doctor for further concerns or questions.

The Florida Lions Eye Clinic recently received three amazing gifts to help further our mission of bringing eye care to the underserved populations of Florida. First, the United Way of Lee, Hendry, Glades, and Okeechobee Counties awarded FLEC a grant to support Optometry/Ophthalmology staffing at the clinic, a mobile eye clinic, and monthly eye screening events. In addition, the United Way orchestrated an additional donation from an anonymous supporter to fund the purchase of equipment used to perform Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty, a form of laser surgery used for glaucoma patients. Second, the Ware Bluegrass Foundation committed to three years of funding, half toward clinic operations and half to support the Clinic Surgery Fund. And third, a generous gift from the Delta Gamma Foundation, made possible by the Greater Naples alumnae chapter of Delta Gamma Fraternity. The FLEC staff and volunteers are grateful to these organizations, and all the other wonderful organizations that support the Clinic, in helping to bring clear vision to those most in need in our community.

We're participating in the myWalgreens donation program!

At Walgreens, you’ll earn unlimited 1% Walgreens Cash rewards when you shop with your myWalgreens membership and you can contribute $1, $5, or more of your Walgreens Cash rewards to local and national charities making a difference in your community. It’s that easy and the amount you donate is up to you!
Donate your myWalgreens cash rewards to Florida Lions Eye Clinic thru August 31, 2021. Learn more at www.mywalgreens.com