

Eyes Wrong!

The Eyecare Trust's top ten eyecare misdemeanours.

1. DON'T smoke. Smokers have a significantly higher risk of eye disease than non-smokers. According to research published by the RNIB smokers are twice as likely to lose their sight in later life than non-smokers. Tobacco chemicals damage the blood vessels behind your eyes increasing your risk of developing age-related macular degeneration.

2. DON'T shower with your contacts in. You should ALWAYS take your contact lenses out before showering. If you don't remove your lenses they risk possible contamination from an organism called *acanthamoeba*, which is present in tap water. Whilst this organism doesn't normally pose a problem to your health a contaminated lens can lead to a very painful and potentially blinding infection of the cornea - *acanthamoeba keratitis*. To prevent the risk of infection contact lens wearers should:

- Never use tap or bottled water to rinse their lenses or lens case
- Remove lenses whilst swimming or using a hot tub
- Dry their hands thoroughly before touching your lenses
- Don't wear contacts longer than recommended

3. DON'T forget to wear goggles when doing DIY. A staggering 20,000 eye accidents a year - one every 25 minutes! - occur as a direct result of 'Doing It Yourself'!

4. DON'T let your child wear toy sunglasses. These offer little UV protection and can actually cause more damage because the tinted lenses dilate the pupil allowing more UV light to enter the eye. Check that the lenses filter at LEAST 99 per cent of the UVA & UVB light and look out for the CE or BS EN 1836:2005 marks when choosing sunglasses for your child (or indeed yourself) as this ensures that they offer a safe level of UV protection.

5. DON'T rub an irritated eye. If a foreign object enters your eye, DON'T RUB IT. Lift your upper eyelid outward and gently pull in down over the lower lash. This causes tears to flow and will often wash the object out of your eye. You may have to repeat this several times. If the object does not wash out,

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contact your optometrist immediately.

6. DON'T forget that it's a driver's responsibility to ensure they can pass the number plate test at ALL times. It is a legal requirement that motorists meet the visual standard for driving every time they get behind the wheel. If you require prescription eye wear for driving make sure you wear it - no matter how short your journey!

7. DON'T share face-clothes, handkerchiefs or cosmetics - you increase the risk of suffering from infection (eg: conjunctivitis).

8. NEVER leave your make up on when you go to bed. Leaving your eye make-up on over night could potentially lead to you waking up with sore or irritated eyes so it's always advisable to remove your make-up before falling into bed - no matter how tired you're feeling!

9. NEVER use eyecare products or cosmetics beyond their expiry date. Recent EU legislation requires cosmetic packaging to carry a symbol to indicate how long a particular product can be used after opening. Mascara will typically last three to four months.

10. DON'T put off having an eye examination. The Eyecare Trust recommends that you have an eye examination once every two years, unless otherwise advised by your optometrist. An eye examination will not only detect problems with your vision but it can also uncover a number of other underlying health problems.

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