

Don't be short-sighted about your eyes

Mark Your Calendar for the month-long observance of **Save Your Vision Month**, now in its 83rd year. The American Optometric Association reminds Americans of the importance of regular, comprehensive eye exams with a month's worth of vision-saving tips displayed on a calendar.



Eye health is intrinsically linked to overall health. Thus Save Your Vision Month has

taken on a greater prominence in the health world with its emphasis on **Healthy Eyes Healthy People**.

Your eyes are often the best windows to your health. By looking into your eyes, your optometrist can tell a lot about your general health. For example, did you know that some systemic and chronic diseases, especially diabetes, can often be detected by an optometrist during a comprehensive eye exam?

Since more than 33 percent of people with diabetes don't know that they have it, an eye examination can be the only clue to detecting this potentially life-threatening disease. By dilating the pupil, your optometrist can see inside your eye using an ophthalmoscope, which lights and magnifies the blood vessels in your eyes. Changes to these blood vessels can signify various stages of diabetic retinopathy. Left untreated, it can cause blindness. For those suffering from diabetes without knowing it, the detection and treatment of this disease can mean relief on many levels.

Other eye diseases, like glaucoma, may cause vision damage and eventually blindness without the patient ever experiencing any symptoms. During a comprehensive eye exam, your optometrist measures the pressure within your eye and examines the optic nerve in the eye, thereby determining the existence of glaucoma.

Save Your Vision Month raises awareness among the general public and targets at-risk groups to remind them of the need for regular, comprehensive eye examinations to detect eye health problems, general health issues, and vision difficulties.

Nutrition Tip: The Benefits of a Multivitamin

While many people get enough vitamins from a healthy and balanced diet, others should take a multivitamin supplement to help maintain a healthy body.

Children and pregnant women need more vitamins than the average person, and may be prescribed a multivitamin by their doctors, says the U.S. National Library of Medicine (NLM).

Other candidates for a multivitamin include people whose illness prevents them from absorbing

enough vitamins from food, or people who don't or can't eat enough vitamin-rich foods.



Multivitamins are available in chewable tablets, capsules, tablets you swallow, and in liquid form. It's important to follow the package or doctor's instructions when taking a multivitamin, the NLM says.

Keep Your Kidneys Working Well

Your kidneys are your body's filters. They remove waste and excess fluid from your blood. People who have high blood pressure and diabetes are at higher risk for kidney disease because of the way these conditions damage the blood vessels and other parts of these vital organs.

An important job

The kidneys work by cleaning your blood as it passes through tiny filtering units known as nephrons. These filters process important chemicals and nutrients, and they remove wastes such as urea and creatinine, which are left over when protein is broken down. Whatever your body doesn't need is eliminated in urine. If these wastes aren't removed, they can accumulate and make you sick. Your kidneys help balance the amount of chemicals—such as sodium, phosphorus, and potassium—in your blood. The right levels of these chemicals are essential for good health.

Causes and symptoms of kidney disease

Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two main causes of kidney disease and kidney failure, especially if they're not well-controlled. According to the National Kidney Foundation, about 30 percent of people with type 1 diabetes and 10 to 40 percent of people with type 2 diabe-

tes will eventually have kidney failure. Type 2 diabetes often produces symptoms that are so subtle and develop so gradually that they're easy to miss. High blood pressure usually doesn't produce any symptoms.

Diabetes and high blood pressure can cause damage to the nephrons. Often, this occurs gradually over years. You may not realize what's happening until the damage is severe enough to cause obvious symptoms. These may include puffiness around your eyes, or swelling in your hands or feet. Contact your doctor promptly if you see any of these warning signs. Blood and urine tests can tell you whether there's a problem with your kidneys.

Preventive measures

Once kidney damage starts, it can be slowed, but it can't always be reversed. That's why prevention is crucial. These steps can help keep your kidneys healthy:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat nutritiously and exercise.
- Don't smoke.
- Talk with your doctor about appropriate medical tests.
- Follow your doctor's advice faithfully if you have diabetes or high blood pressure.