



May 2006

## Healthy Vision Month

Occupational eye safety is the focus of Healthy Vision Month 2006. Eye health at work starts with observing safety practices. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has outlined eye safety guidelines for jobs that pose an inherent risk to eye health. If you are a federal manager you should get familiar with applicable OSHA guidelines and become aware of vision hazards at the workplace.

Also, keeping eyes healthy begins with regular eye exams. See your eye care specialist regularly and don't pass on those dilated eye exams; they're worth a few hours of blurry vision. A dilated eye exam is the only way to detect changes in the retina or optic nerve or both. These examinations allow eye care professionals to see into the rear portion of the eye,

discover subtle changes and, initiate timely treatment, if appropriate. Don't avoid these exams because many eye diseases and disorders progress very slowly and usually have subtle or no symptoms. For most people, it is only after eyesight is irreversibly damaged that these diseases are discovered; often too late for preventive treatments.

### Learn more

For more information about Healthy Vision Month 2006 visit: Healthy People 2010/Healthy Vision site: <http://www.healthyvision2010.org/hvm>

National Eye Institute (NEI): <http://www.nei.nih.gov/>  
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>

## Eye On Exercise

If you spend long hours in front of a computer screen at work or home, you've probably experienced blurred vision, burning or dry eyes, and difficulty focusing. Eyestrain and headaches associated with computer work can be distracting and make it very difficult to be productive on the job.

If you're feeling a bit squinty by the end of the day, give some of the suggestions below a try.

- Every 15 minutes or so, give the muscles in the eye a chance to relax by focusing on something in the distance at least 20 feet away.
- Blink repeatedly for a few seconds. This replenishes the tear film and keeps eyes moist.
- Try to keep the lighting levels in your office as even as possible. Eye strain is increased when there are contrasting light levels in your work area.

- Beware of glare: Use glare guard on your computer screen to reduce glare.
- Monitor placement is vital: The top of your monitor should be slightly above eye level. Note: bifocal users should lower the monitor to be able to view it without tilting the head (or get a pair of glasses only for computer use).
- Relax eye muscles: Hold your finger right in front of your eyes and focus on it. Then, while keeping eyes focused on it, slowly move your finger away from you. Then, focus into the distance and back to the finger as you slowly bring the finger back to the starting position a few inches in front of your eyes.

Computer work won't seem like torture if you incorporate some of these habits into your daily routine. And don't forget what's below your neck! Remember to get up and stretch every 30 minutes or so to prevent neck pain and stiffness from prolonged sitting.

---

## Beat The Odds With Protective Eyewear

---

Healthy vision isn't just about eye exams and wearing your eye glasses. With summer here, now's the time to make sure to protect you and your family's eyesight at work, at home, and at play. Each year, over 40,000 adults and children injure their eyes while playing sports. But by thinking ahead you can beat the eye injury odds. Whether you're making plans for some outdoor fun or even routine warm-weather home projects, don't forget your protective eyewear.

Protective eyewear doesn't have to be clunky or uncomfortable. Today, there are plenty of lightweight and fashionable options available so you can play or work safely and comfortably. And if you're worried about eye gear that fogs up in the heat, you can buy fog-free eyewear too!

Below are some tips to help you avoid eye injuries:

- Look for protective eyewear that's made of polycarbonate plastic
- Wear safety goggles for racquet sports or basketball
- Use helmets and face shields for playing hockey
- Know that regular glasses don't provide enough protection
- Make sure eyewear has ultraviolet light (UV) protection

### Learn more

For more eye safety tips, visit the Prevent Blindness America website at:  
<http://www.preventblindness.org/safety/tips.html>

Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going.

*-Jim Rohn*

---

## The Skinny on Trans Fats

---

The revised Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 outline the benefits of certain types of fats. These guidelines recommend that we limit saturated fats and warn against the consumption of trans fatty acid (i.e., trans fat); suggesting it be kept as low as possible.

### What is Trans Fat?

Food manufacturers began using trans fats to increase shelf life of foods about 20 years ago. It's created through a chemical process by which hydrogen is added to vegetable oils (partial hydrogenation). Now, researchers agree that trans fat is more dangerous than saturated fat because it raises the levels of unhealthy blood cholesterol and lowers the levels of beneficial blood cholesterol. Worse, trans fat has been implicated in contributing to the nation's obesity epidemic and rise in diabetes rates because it may actually alter the way cells work.

### The Nutrition Facts Panel

Since trans fats in commercially prepared foods has become a public health concern, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) now requires food manufacturers

to list trans fat on Nutrition Facts panels on all products packaged on or after January 1, 2006.

However, there is just one note of caution about these new FDA regulations. Manufacturers can claim their product has ZERO grams trans fat if their product contains less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. So beware! If you eat several servings of your favorite snack, you could unknowingly eat several grams of trans fat. It wouldn't be too hard to do this because we often eat more than the serving size listed on the Nutrition Facts panel.

### How to Avoid Trans Fats

Read the Nutrition Facts panel and choose foods lower in trans fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol. Also be sure to read the ingredients listing and limit or avoid foods that list "hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated" vegetable oils. Pay special attention to the order of the ingredients list. If it is listed first, second, or third, there is quite a bit of it in the product.

(continued on next page)

---

## Trans Fats (cont'd)

---

Shop wisely and make healthy food choices. Find out which of your favorite foods contain unhealthy trans fats. Typically, trans fats are found in commercially baked products like crackers, candies, cookies, cakes, bread, and snack foods. Trans fats are also found in fried foods, fast foods, salad dressing, and other processed foods. When eating out, ask about trans fats too. Cooking oils made from trans fats are often used for frying in restaurants.

Foods that come from nature won't have trans fats and they represent your safest nutritional choice. Naturally low fat foods are generally the best such as fruits, vegetables, chicken, turkey, fish, beans, whole grains, select breads, and some cereals. One tip when shopping is to keep to the perimeter of the store. Most processed foods – which contain the most trans fats – are found on the inner isles of the supermarket.

And remember, we now understand that all fat is not bad. While you should limit saturated fats, unsaturated fats actually do help reduce blood cholesterol and heart disease risk, so trying to keep those fats too low is not typically recommended. In fact, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in foods such as nuts, fish, and oils help lower "bad" cholesterol levels.

### Learn more

For more information about the new Nutrition Facts Panel, visit the FDA web page at <http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/transfat>.

Learn more about trans fats and other fats from American Heart Association at <http://www.americanheart.org>.

## Deskercise Corner: Lower Legs

### Calf Stretches

While seated at your desk, remove your shoes and place both feet flat on the floor. Then, raise your toes and hold the stretch for about 10 seconds. Next, with starting with feet flat on the floor, raise your heels as high as you can and hold for about 10 seconds. Do this a few times a day for a nice stretch.