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Celebrating National Eye Health Day - Friday 17th March 2006

Once we reach the age of 50, 100 per cent of Britons will have some sort of age related problem associated with their eye sight.

Whether it's hereditary, or a sign of getting older, eye deterioration is a very real threat for a nation that holds a growing number of baby boomers.

A Call To Action. As part of National Eye Health Day, FOCUS Laser Vision's lead specialist and eye surgeon Dr David Allamby, is calling on all Britons to be aware of the warning signs, to ensure they don't put their vision at risk.

"We are currently experiencing a unique phenomenon in population trends with the oldest baby boomers this year celebrating their 60th birthday, meaning a significant increase in people who cannot see well up close.

One of the biggest problems affecting people today is age-related presbyopia, with more than 20 million people in the UK now having this condition. Most of the people don't even know that treatment is available," he said.

Apart from this, some of the most common age related eye conditions that can lead to sight deterioration in older people include glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts and diabetes.

The secret to healthy eyes is in early detection.

Ten tips to keep your eyes in good health:

1. Get regular check ups with your ophthalmologist or optometrist and know how to ask the right questions
2. If your condition is serious, seek the advice of a registered and reputable eye specialist
3. Make sure your specialist dilates your pupils to check the back of your eye for any abnormalities
4. Stop smoking. Not only can smoking can cause blindness, but it makes you physically age quicker!
5. Prevent against eye deterioration and UV sun damage by wearing sunglasses and a broad rimmed hat
6. Always wear appropriate safety glasses to protect your eyes, especially when you are outdoors or on a building site when drilling or grinding
7. Maintain a balanced diet and eat foods such as leafy green vegetables that are rich in antioxidants, which are believed to improve vision and general eye health
8. Practice good eye health hygiene if you wear contact lenses to minimise bacterial infection
9. Participate in regular exercise. Exercise increases the heart rate and boosts blood circulation which is essential for maintaining a healthy eye structure, especially the optic nerve

10. Incorporate flaxseed oil into your diet, because it's good for treating dry eyes, caused by factors such as living in an arid climate.

Symptoms to watch out for to detect if you have poor eye health:

- Inability to see clearly for near objects e.g.: newspaper or menu
- Blurred or hazy distance vision
- Sore or redness in the white part of the eye
- Temporary loss of vision
- Irritable, itchy or watery eyes

Eye Diseases Which Can Lead To Sight Deterioration

Presbyopia:

Is Greek for "ageing eyes." Presbyopia is one of the biggest causes of vision loss in the UK. The latest vision correction methods include Conductive Keratoplasty (CK) treatment, Intra Ocular Lenses, and presbyopic laser, which is about 2 years away.

Glaucoma:

Glaucoma is the loss of vision caused by damage to the optic nerve, the part of the eye which is responsible for carrying [images](#) to the brain. You are six times more likely to get glaucoma if you are over 60 years old, or if you come from an African background. There is currently no cure for this condition, although early detection, surgery and medication can prevent vision loss.

Macular degeneration & smoke related macular degeneration:

Dubbed to be the number one killer when it comes to eye loss in the country, macular degeneration affects around 500,000 people, of which 54,000 have the condition through smoking. There is currently no immediate cure besides to stop smoking.

Cataracts:

A cataract is the clouding or darkening that develops around the clear lens, which impairs vision. Cataracts are associated with diseases, medicines, or normal ageing. Symptoms include blurred, double or hazy vision, the appearance of dark spots, nearsightedness, a feeling of having a [film](#) over the eyes and light sensitivity. Treatment includes cataract lens exchange, with current trials in place to incorporate multifocal lenses to correct presbyopia.

Retinal detachment:

Retinal detachment is a condition that is most common in middle aged and elderly and if gone undetected, it can cause irreparable damage and even blindness. Retinal detachment occurs when the retina separates from the back of the eye, or when fluid collects underneath the corneal layer causing the retinal layer to separate. If caught in time, the retina can be re-attached through emergency surgery.