



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Want to see into the future this New Year?

Every year we make New Year resolutions about the things we want to achieve or change in our lives. But what about the things we already have and maybe take for granted; like our eyesight? Most of us take regular trips to the dentist and look after our teeth, but how many of us take the same care over our eyes? The UK currently has two million people who are blind or partially sighted¹. National charity, Action for Blind People, offers ten tips to protect your eyesight in 2008 and beyond...

1. Don some shades: We need light to see, but some types of light can be bad for our eyes and can lead to conditions like cataracts. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 16 million people worldwide are blind because of cataracts - 20 per cent of which may be due to UV radiation exposure². You can protect your eyes simply by wearing a pair of sunglasses. Check your shades have a CE mark which indicates that they meet European safety standards.

2. Catch up with the office gossip: If you use a computer at work, take frequent breaks from your screen – at least once an hour. Resting your eyes can avoid headaches, eyestrain, soreness and double vision. Some doctors believe that not taking regular breaks from the computer or television can lead to short-sightedness.



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3. Diet for your eyes: Experts think that some foods can help prevent eye conditions; like cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. These foods all contain either lutein or zeaxanthin and are found in many fruit and vegetables that are often quite dark in colour. Eye-friendly foods include: mango, squash, broccoli, green beans, sprouts, kiwi fruit, spinach and dark green lettuce.

4. Get to know your family: Glaucoma is a condition which causes vision to become patchy and may lead to tunnel vision. Detected early, it can be treated and controlled - often using eye drops. Glaucoma can be hereditary (although it may skip generations) so if members of your family have the condition, go and get yourself tested. If a close relative has glaucoma, and you are over the age of 40, you get a free glaucoma test every two years.

5. Don't cut corners: If you wear contact lenses, only use commercially prepared solutions for contact lens care and never use tap or distilled water, or saliva. If you don't stick to a strict cleansing routine your eyes can become infected and you risk corneal disease, or even the loss of an eye.

6. Ditch the housework: Cleaning, DIY or gardening can be hazardous to your eyes as chemicals, garden debris, or nails and splinters can all cause injury. Whilst you can't really avoid these chores, you could consider wearing safety goggles.



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7. Beauty beware: Be careful when using eye make up remover or any other cream around your eyes. Also, close your eyes or turn away when spraying cosmetics like perfume or hairspray. Cosmetics can severely irritate the eyes.

8. Know what to do: Never guess about the severity of an eye injury. Seek medical attention as soon as possible following an injury, particularly if you have pain in the eye, blurred vision, or loss of vision. Immediately flush the eye with water continuously for at least 30 minutes.

9. Manage your health: Although the majority of diabetics never experience any eye problems at all, people who have diabetes are at risk of losing vision through a condition called diabetic retinopathy. People with diabetes are entitled to both a free general eye examination and free digital retinopathy screening every year.³

10. See into the future: More than half of all sight loss is avoidable if the cause is caught early. It is recommended that people have an eye test every two years – which is free to anyone under 16 or over 60 - but research shows that one in three of us fails to do this⁴. Out of all these New Year resolutions, if you do just one thing to protect your eyes for the future, make it an eye test.

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Action for blind people

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- Action for Blind People is an expert national organisation, ensuring blind and partially sighted people get practical support in all aspects of their lives. Contact Action for Blind People's National Freephone Helpline on 0800 915 4666 or www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk
- The following organisations may also be able to offer support and advice on eye health: Diabetes UK, Galloways Society for the Blind, Guide Dogs for the Blind, International Glaucoma Association, Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB).
- 2007 marks Action's 150 years of transforming the lives of blind and partially sighted people.
- If abbreviating "Action for Blind People", please use "Action" rather than AFBP or ABP.

¹ In 2006, 370,500 people were registered as blind or partially sighted in England, Scotland and Wales. However, it is estimated that the actual number of blind and partially sighted people is 2 million according to a report by Professor Astrid Fletcher commissioned by the RNIB and published in 2006.

² 'Ultra Violet Radiation: Global solar UV Index', World Health Organisation, August 2002

³ Diabetes UK offers more advice at www.diabetes.org.uk/yourvision

⁴ 'Open Your Eyes', RNIB Campaign Report 25, Barbara McLaughlan, January 2006