



Glaucoma treatments
Are eye drops the best option?



Vision exams
How they can save your life

**MEDIA
PLANET**

November 2010

VISION HEALTH & WELLNESS



3
TIPS

A VISION OF EYE HEALTH

World-class, legally blind, triathlete
Aaron Scheidies shares his recipe for success

PHOTO: MARCY BROWNE

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CHALLENGES

Most **Americans consider vision** the most important of the five senses.

Think about your eyes

We treasure the ability to see and interact with the world around us. Yet, many people put their vision at risk by not scheduling eye examinations on a regular basis. Some may not have examinations due to lack of insurance. With the passage of health care reform, it is our hope that barriers to regular eye care have been eliminated. Our profession has worked to ensure patient access to vision care.

Professional eye care should start early in life. Good vision is a key factor in a child's development and academic progress. The American Optometric Association (AOA) recommends eye exams by an eye

doctor at six months of age, at age three, before starting school, and every two years thereafter. For those children considered at risk, your doctor of optometry may recommend more frequent exams.

Most adults enjoy good vision. By taking proper steps to maintain a healthy lifestyle and by protecting your eyes from stress and injury, you can avoid many eye and vision problems. This includes eating properly, avoiding smoking, exercising regularly and wearing sunglasses.

Because it is a fact of life that vision changes with age, it is equally important that adults receive regular eye exams. Americans in their 40s and 50s are at the stage when many are affected by vision problems. Regular eye examinations are important to check for eye diseases such as glaucoma and age-



Joe E. Ellis, O.D.
President, American Optometric Association

BEST TIP

UV protection

1 Wear sunglasses to protect against damaging ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Make little changes

2 Watch what you eat—little changes in your diet can have a big impact on eye health.

Make your appointment

3 And most importantly, have you and your family's eyes examined regularly!

related macular degeneration and in order to see as clearly as possible. In addition, exams often offer indications about an individual's overall health. If you are at risk for eye problems due to family history, diabetes, or high blood pressure, exams are particularly important. Because some eye problems have no obvious signs or symptoms, people are often unaware that a problem exists. Early diagnosis and treatment is essential to safeguarding vision.

We hope that you will find a wealth of helpful information in the articles included in this special report so that you'll have the tools and knowledge to ensure a lifetime of healthy vision. We encourage you to think about your eyes, and visit www.aoa.org for more information or to find a doctor of optometry near you.



WE RECOMMEND



Aaron Scheidies discusses how he has persevered despite his vision impairment.

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The importance of an early diagnosis

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The Wilmoth Family shares their story of how their son was diagnosed with Glaucoma

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**GOOD SAM.
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David Boyer, MD
Retinal Surgeon

Meet Dr. David Boyer, one of America's leading Retinal Surgeons bringing the nation's best healthcare to Good Samaritan Hospital.

Dr. Boyer is at the forefront of retinal surgery innovation and outcomes, a leader in the latest research and therapies for macular degeneration, diabetes and AIDS. He heads up one of the largest-volume retinal surgery programs in the country, based out of Good Samaritan Hospital.

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— David Boyer, MD

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NEWS

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR EYE CARE

■ **Question:** Don't think you need to have your eyes checked this year?

■ **Answer:** Think again. According to the latest research and the nation's leading eye care specialists, regular eye exams can not only preserve your vision, they can save your life.

According to Dr. A. Paul Chous of Chous Eye Care Associates in Tacoma, Washington, "Small blood vessels are most apparent in kidneys, long nerves, and retinae. Changes or damage to retinae, which are symptoms of systemic diseases, are easily detectable during eye exams." Diseases most commonly diagnosed as a result of eye exams are diabetes and hypertension.

Optometrists such as Dr. Lee Ball of the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center recommend an annual dilated eye exam. "The benefit of the dilated eye exam is that it is the only procedure that allows us to directly view the blood vessels noninvasively. The eye offers a unique and easily accessible window to study the health and disease of blood vessels in the body."

"The benefit of the dilated eye exam is that it is the only procedure that allows us to directly view the blood vessels noninvasively."

Lee Ball, PhD
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

How are diseases diagnosed in such an exam?

One way is through identification of breakdowns, leaks, or blockages of retinal blood vessels, all signs of diabetic retinopathy, a common complication of diabetes. In this complication, blood vessels in the eye experience chronic damage which can result in blurred vision, scarring, or, ultimately, blindness.

Diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness among working age people. It is currently estimated that nearly all patients with type 1 diabetes will develop the complication, and more than 60 percent of

patients with type 2 diabetes will eventually develop it. Diabetic retinopathy, however, is treatable, and one of the most preventable causes of vision loss and blindness.

"Keeping tight control of blood sugar and blood pressure levels can slow or prevent the development of diabetic retinopathy," says Dr. Richard Roe, vitreoretinal specialist with the Good Samaritan Hospital. Prevention is key, and with up to one-third of estimated American diabetics undiagnosed, symptoms such as retinal blood vessel damage could be the red flag needed for a new diagnosis.

Latinos and African-Americans are two to three times more likely to develop diabetes, and obese people are also at a higher risk. Routine eye exams are the best way to stay ahead of vision loss and disease. The warning signs are easily detectable and treatable.

Take your vision and your health into your own hands. Speak to your primary care physician about eye exams today.

PETER QUIGLEY

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TIP

1

GET YOUR EYES CHECKED REGULARLY



Diabetes facts

Dr. David Boyer of the Retina-Vitreous Medical Group at Good Samaritan Hospital in Los Angeles, CA shares facts and tips about how diabetes affects vision health.

➔ Diabetic retinopathy does not hurt.

➔ Your vision may be perfect and you may still need laser treatment.

➔ Control of your diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure can actually reverse the diabetic retinal changes.

➔ Sudden onset of black spots (floaters) may indicate a vitreous hemorrhage that requires treatment.

➔ New treatments of diabetic retinopathy include intravitreal (intraocular) injections of the

same medicines used to treat wet macular degeneration.

➔ Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent vision loss.

➔ Twenty five percent of all diabetic patients have macular edema.



INSPIRATION



Question: How did Aaron Scheidies react to suffering from a hereditary condition?

Answer: He focused his efforts at becoming a top triathlete as well as an academic standout.

Despite legal blindness, Aaron Scheidies keeps his sights on being a top triathlete

During his youth, Scheidies was diagnosed with Stargardt's disease. Stargardt's disease is a form of juvenile macular degeneration. Similar to those with age related macular degeneration, Scheidies is not completely blind, yet his vision is at acuity of roughly 20/500.

According to David S. Boyer, M.D. of the Retina-Vitreous Surgical Program at Good Samaritan Hospital, "Macular degeneration a chronic eye condition that affects the macula, the portion of the retina responsible for central vision. As it begins to deteriorate, it creates a blind spot in the central vision."

Scheidies was obviously greatly affected, but once discovering tri-

athlons in his teenage years he has since gone on to finish more than 125 races at various distances from sprints to a full Ironman, and has been named a five time World Champion and seven times a National Champion in the Physically Challenged category.

Not just a star athlete

While Scheidies does enlist the help of guides to compete in triathlons, the challenges of his degenerative condition obviously exist everywhere for him. Using the same vigor he uses to compete in triathlons Aaron also was a classroom star having graduated from Michigan State University with a perfect 4.0 GPA and degree in Kinesiology and also having completed his Doctorate in Physical Therapy at the University

of Washington. He has gone on to become a physical therapist with RehabCare, working with the geriatric community of patients.

Dealing with macular degeneration

Aaron's passion has led him to join forces with Kemin Health, the makers of FloraGLO, the most clinically researched lutein brand found in leading ocular supplements worldwide. Aaron, a FloraGLO spokesperson, wants to educate the public about the importance of ocular nutrition. Aaron says, "You hear a lot about the skin, heart and cholesterol, but not enough about eye health. Even people with perfect vision should be eating lutein rich foods and taking a daily eye vitamin. Just like the

rest of your body, your eyes need certain nutrients to keep functioning at their best." Clinical research shows we need to consume ten milligrams of lutein from diet and eye vitamins each day to protect our eyes and keep them healthy since the body doesn't make lutein on its own. Scheidies constantly repeats his mantra, "You don't need to have vision to be a visionary." As a reminder that his or others lack of vision does not have to be any sort of roadblock in life.

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NEWS

Alternate treatments for glaucoma come to the forefront

Glaucoma, which is a leading cause of developed irreversible blindness, has long been treated by eye drops as a primary therapy.

As this therapy has not proven entirely effective for many glaucoma cases, there has been a shift in recent years to alternate treatments for this prevalent eye disease, some of which include SLT (Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty) Therapy and glaucoma shunt implants.

Dr. Mark Latina M.D. an ophthalmologist and a chief pioneer of SLT

said this about the need for alternate treatments: "Studies have shown that patients' compliance taking one eye medication is usually around 70 percent and this decreases significantly to 35 percent or so with the addition of a second medication."

Alternate treatment techniques

SLT is a cold laser treatment, which unlike its laser treatment predecessors can effectively treat the glaucoma without having hardly any effect on the surrounding healthy eye tissue. Dr. Latina added, "The SLT

"Studies have shown that patients' compliance taking one eye medication is usually around 70 percent and this decreases significantly to 35 percent or so with the addition of a second medication."

Mark Latina MD, PhD
Ophthalmologist, Chief Pioneer of SLT

is ideal for any patient with poorly controlled eye pressure requiring eye pressure reduction, and it is especially effective in those patients with newly diagnosed open angle glaucoma as first line therapy."

When a patient is not responding to normal eye drop therapy, glaucoma shunt implants such as the Ahmed implant are used to aid in treatment. In the case of the Ahmed valve, it is implanted to aid in postoperative drops in intraocular pressure, which in turn works with medicinal treatment to help relieve the eye pressure brought about by glaucoma.

Asking your doctor about alternate treatment

"Luckily in the United States we can individualize each patient with therapeutic goals to minimize vision loss in the long term," said Dr. Alan Robin, associate professor of ophthalmology and international health at Johns Hopkins University. Glaucoma patients should consult with their eye doctor to find the optimal treatment for them.

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"The implantation of Ahmed valve is an effective surgical procedure for the management of Uveitic Glaucoma."

Ozdal, P. C., R. N. Vianna, et al. (2005). "Ahmed valve implantation in glaucoma secondary to chronic Uveitis." Eye.



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INSPIRATION



Question: How important were early trips to the eye doctor during his early childhood for Christopher Wilmoth?

Answer: By catching the glaucoma and cornea cracked in two places and later the amblyopia caused by his congenital glaucoma early, doctors were able to repair and help strengthen Christopher's eye.

How Christopher Wilmoth overcame congenital glaucoma

When Christopher Wilmoth was roughly seven months old, his mom Cathy, at the time on her third child, noticed something was wrong. "Christopher's eyes were huge, and for some reason kept tearing all the time."

On what she thought would be a routine pediatric trip, they found that Christopher had a cornea cracked in two places and juvenile glaucoma. Immediate surgery helped alleviate the pressure and essentially helped Christopher to see.

Then around the age of four, Cathy once again noticed something was slightly off about the way Christopher was looking at things. She discovered his eye had effectively stopped working, due to a condition called amblyopia (more commonly known as lazy eye), where the brain shuts down vision processing in the weaker of the eyes. Ophthalmologists treat this by placing an eye patch over the good eye to get the brain to switch the other back on.

The first time Cathy patched his eye, he couldn't see a thing, she



GROWING UP. Left: Chris Wilmoth as a baby. Right: Chris Wilmoth after his first surgery. PHOTO: CATHY WILMOTH

recalls. "Within five minutes he said, 'I can see Scooby Doo.' The brain flipped back on," Cathy Wilmoth says. "I was almost in tears."

The importance of eye exams

"There should be a routine exam and vision testing for all children, and when in doubt, with anything out of the ordinary consult your ophthalmologist," said Dr. Andrew Iwach, executive director of the Glaucoma Center of San Francisco. "Geteyesmart.org is also a great resource from the American Academy of Ophthalmology regarding questions on getting eyes checked."

Obstacles? What obstacles?

Cathy spoke about how excited she is with Christopher: "He's an athlete and very outgoing, playing everything from baseball to soccer and with such an incredibly bubbly personality that he has never thought anything of his vision issues."

Special thanks to the Glaucoma Research Foundation for their help in facilitating this interview. For more information, please visit <http://www.glaucoma.org/>.

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TRUE OR FALSE?

Children don't need eye exams until they're in school

■ To ensure proper development of the visual system, children should have their eyes examined at 6 months of age. Early detection and treatment can prevent many vision problems (like Amblyopia, or "lazy eye.")

DR. KAREN GRIFFITH; PETALUMA

Children don't need eye exams by an optometrist because their eyes are checked at school

■ Changes to a child's visual system can occur throughout their developmental stages, so it is important that children regularly receive comprehensive eye examinations from a primary eye care specialist to monitor their vision status, instead of relying on sporadic checks at school. These comprehensive exams can correct vision abnormalities and ensure that they are not at risk for eye-related diseases or conditions.

COA PRESIDENT, DR. HILARY HAWTHORNE; LOS ANGELES

If my child had a vision problem I would know about it

■ Unfortunately, most vision problems go undetected until a child has had an eye exam. Parents are surprised to find out how much their child was not seeing before they had their eyes examined. One of the most frequent remarks we hear is, "I couldn't see the leaves on trees before I got my glasses."

DR. ELISE BRISCO; LOS ANGELES

Children usually outgrow crossed eyes

■ On the contrary, most children compensate for the misalignment of the eyes, either by tilting or turning their head to one side, or the brain ends up suppressing (shutting off) vision in one of the eyes to prevent double vision which can lead to Amblyopia. Strabismus (crossed eyes) needs to be taken care of either by glasses, vision therapy, and/or—as a last resort—surgery.

DR. ELIO POLSINELLI; SAN FRANCISCO

If children get glasses too early, their eyes will weaken from being too dependant on glasses

■ Glasses do not, and cannot make your eyes "weaker." Instead glasses correct the power of your child's eyes so that they can see the world correctly which affects their performance. Not wearing glasses when needed can impair the development of the visual system.

DR. ELISE BRISCO; LOS ANGELES

Children are too young to wear contact lenses

■ Children are very well suited for contact lenses. Contact lenses help a child wear their prescription full time, improve their self confidence, and improve how they see the world. It is also good for sports.

DR. ELISE BRISCO; LOS ANGELES

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INSIGHT

Those **suffering from dry eye** often feel like there is something in their eye or have scratchy, gritty, burning or watery eyes. Their eyes may tire or be irritated easily and they may have blurred vision.

Seemingly trivial condition can become a disability

Optometrists can prescribe treatment to relieve dry eye symptoms.

Sometimes tears are a good thing. In most people, a constant tear film lubricates and protects the eyes, but in some people—whether it is due to surgery, aging or environmental factors—a decreased production of fluid can weaken the tear film and

cause a condition called dry eye. More than just an irritating condition, it can cause symptoms ranging from discomfort to corneal scarring and visual impairment.

“Dry eye complaints already account for 25 percent of all optometric visits, and we are seeing a rise in this number,” says LA optometrist Dr. Elise Brisco, a spokesperson for the California Optometric Association.

“We partially attribute this to the increase in vision correction surgery; there are about 1.4 million such surgeries performed in the U.S. each year, and dry eye is a common side effect.”

More common among people who wear contact lenses

In addition to those who have had vision correction or cosmetic eyelid surgery (of which there are over 230,000 each year in this country), the condition is more common among people who wear soft contact lenses, which absorb fluid on the eye surface. Women over the age of 40, a bulging demographic group, are the most affected. Women suffer from dry eye two to three times more often than men, which is thought to be due to hormonal changes and tear production decrease, up to one-third less in the average 45 year old woman. Additional causes are medication side effects, computer use and environmental factors including dry climate, pollution and wind.

Those suffering from dry eye often feel like there is something in their eye or have scratchy, gritty, burning or watery eyes. Their eyes may tire or be irritated easily and they may have blurred vision. The symptoms tend to get worse as the day progresses. For some people it is a minor irritation, but for others it can be a debilitating condition

“Dry eye complaints already account for 25 percent of all optometric visits, and we are seeing a rise in this number.”

Elise Brisco, PhD
Spokesdoctor, California
Optometric Association

that causes painful scratchiness, light sensitivity and stinging in the eyes.

“It is important for those experiencing these symptoms to schedule a comprehensive eye exam with their optometrist. Mild to moderate cases can usually be managed with common treatments, but more severe cases can cause chronic pain and even visual impairment—5 percent of dry eye cases can be lasting and debilitating,” according to the California Optometric Association. Dry eye cannot be cured, but optometrists can prescribe treatment so your eyes remain healthy and your vision is unaffected.

Some treatments that your optometrist might prescribe include adding nutritional supplements to your diet including

omega-6 fatty acids, potassium and beta carotene, blinking more frequently, increasing humidity at home or work, using artificial tears frequently throughout the day, applying warm compresses, drinking more water, wearing glasses or sunglasses outside to protect the eyes, and using a moisturizing ointment, especially at bedtime. In some cases, small plugs are inserted in the corner of the eyes to slow tear drainage.

The California Optometric Association (COA) urges all Californians to have annual comprehensive eye exams so that their optometrist may detect, diagnose and treat diseases and conditions including dry eye.

To find an optometrist for your comprehensive eye exam, Californians can log on to www.eyehelp.org and click on the find an eye doc link. All optometrists participating in this locator service are California Optometric Association members who adhere to the highest ethical standards and provide the most thorough care.



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