

## Fifty shades of play

Over the last century, sunglasses have evolved to help us work, rest and play in bright conditions.

Choosing the right sunglasses will give your eyes all the protection they need, but what features or specifications should you look for?

Lenses with full UVA and UVB protection will filter out the invisible ultraviolet radiation that can cause everything from sunburnt corneas to cataracts and cancer. All our sunglasses come with UV protection to the highest British and European standard and the UK's UV400 and BSEN1836 marks also confirm lenses are fit for purpose.

Sunglasses lenses come in many forms, each offering different benefits. Polarising lenses and anti-reflective coatings reduce glare from water, making them ideal for water sport enthusiasts. A wide range of lens materials are available, some of which are lightweight yet virtually shatter-proof, while photochromic lenses automatically adjust their tint depending on light levels. There's more information on lens coatings in our 'Putting your coat on' feature, elsewhere in this newsletter.

Always ensure sunglasses completely cover your eyes, otherwise they won't provide full UV protection. We'll be

happy to recommend frames that suit your facial shape and lifestyle requirements.

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**Did you know?** Sunglasses owe much of their early popularity to Hollywood. Powerful studio lights caused red eyes among cast and crew, and sunglasses hid all the damage as well as providing celebrities welcome anonymity.



For more information, or to make an appointment, please contact:

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# A picture of good health

Many eye-related conditions and diseases can be prevented by making healthy lifestyle choices. It's remarkable how bad habits commonly lead to vision problems, and smoking is one of the biggest causes of eye-related diseases.

Recent studies have indicated a link between smoking and age-related macular degeneration, characterised by blurred vision and dark spots. Smoking also doubles the risk of developing cataracts - these cloudy patches in the lens are currently the world's leading cause of impaired vision. Optometrists can easily identify cataracts during regular sight examinations with an ophthalmoscope, and they can be removed with minor surgery.

Repeated exposure to smoke increases the likelihood of conjunctivitis, which is uncomfortable. More serious is the heightened risk of developing diabetes, which affects

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three million people in the UK and has symptoms including intermittently blurred vision, weight loss or excessive tiredness. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of infant eye disorders, harming the remarkably rapid development of a baby's vision (see 'Eyes on the world' for more on this.)

**Did you know?** The first link between cigarettes and cancer was established by German researchers in 1930, although it took another 40 years for these risks to become widely accepted.



## The light fantastic

Lighting should always be chosen for a specific location, from LED reading lamps above the bed to chandeliers capable of illuminating a large apartment. Full spectrum bulbs provide white light that's great for banishing shadows, while kitchens should ideally have spotlights in cooker hoods or hidden under wall units.

Don't block windows with thick curtains or drapes during the daytime, and try to avoid ineffective fluorescent strip lights or heavy lampshades that smother the bulb's brightness.

**Did you know?** Full spectrum lamps have been proven to reduce the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder, which affects many people in winter.

Effective lighting makes life easier for everyone, but it's particularly important for people with less than perfect vision. Lighting our homes and workplaces properly can reduce accidents, improve security and allow our eyes to work to their full capacity.

Babies should have a night light in their nursery because their sensitivity to brightness is far lower than ours, as outlined in our 'Eyes on the world' feature. However, even grown-ups struggle to see in the dark, with low light levels potentially causing eye strain and headaches.

Excessive brightness can result in the same issues, on top of retinal burn (where light sources appear in your vision even with your eyes closed).



# Start thinking smart

**With an estimated 35 million smartphones in the UK, and tablets increasingly replacing PCs and laptops, mobile communication devices are here to stay.**

**However, the human eye wasn't designed for these 21st century gadgets, so it's important to use them in moderation.**



The tiny lettering on smartphone screens may cause eye strain without appropriate reading glasses, we can advise you about vision correction products and prescription strengths. Reading glasses are often recommended for people over the age of 40, and today's varifocal lenses can also help you to navigate those closely-packed lines of text.

Devices like the Kindle e-reader replicate the appearance of a traditional book to reduce eye fatigue, and they're designed to be held at arm's length - a useful tip for any mobile device.

Never spend more than 20 minutes looking at a portable device without giving your eyes a minute to re-focus elsewhere, and zoom in (by pinching two fingers on the screen and pulling them apart) whenever it's possible to do so. Handheld gadgets can shrink their text to fit the available space,

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which can be impossible to read without pinching and zooming. Modern devices can increasingly be operated by voice control interfaces such as Apple's Siri, which can reduce the amount of time spent looking at them.

We'd also recommend adjusting the brightness to a comfortable level, while sunscreens and anti-glare covers can prevent headaches being caused by reflections or bright sunlight. This latter issue may also be overcome by wearing sunglasses.

Mild eye strain caused by overuse of mobile devices can be reduced by using eye drops or trying to blink more frequently. Because people tend to stare intently at computer screens, they blink less than during other activities - this can accelerate the onset of dryness and fatigue.

***"We'd also recommend turning down the brightness levels as much as possible, while sunscreens and anti-glare covers can prevent headaches being caused by reflections or bright sunlight."***

To combat this, eye drop lubricants are available to aid comfort. For more advice on this issue, please call into the practice. Any recurring headaches or blurred vision should immediately be reported to us so that we can examine your eyes and identify possible causes.

**Did you know?** The world's first smartphone was launched in 1994, combining email and cellphone capabilities. It was called the IBM Simon, weighed over a pound and didn't really catch on.



# Eyes on the world

Newborn babies can see shapes and light, with close-range focus enabling them to recognise their mother's face within days. The ability to coordinate both eyes develops throughout the first eight weeks, although a lot of sight-related progress involves simultaneous brain development.

Colours become increasingly distinct during the first few months of life, while a six-month old baby will be gaining depth perception that tracks objects as they move closer or further away from them. Light sensitivity also improves – see 'The light fantastic' article elsewhere in this newsletter for more details.

By nine months, long-distance vision will be approaching its full potential in preparation for reading and playing. Crawling is invaluable for establishing hand-to-eye coordination, and it's better than walking in terms of developing visual skills.

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If you have any concerns regarding a baby's eyes we will be happy to discuss this with you and if necessary arrange for an early check-up to ensure both eyes are developing normally

**Did you know?** Newborn babies can't identify colours because their retinal cells aren't fully developed, but they can see high-contrast patterns like black and white stripes.



## Putting your coat on

rapid temperature changes. Fortunately, anti-mist coatings can prevent condensation from forming in the first place. Hydrophobic layers can also repel water droplets, as well as shrugging off dirt.

These are ideally suited for glasses worn by children or people with outdoor jobs, where rain and grime are often part of daily life. We will be happy to discuss the options available during your next visit to the practice

**Did you know?** Some lens tints and coatings can help patients who suffer from dyslexia or colour-blindness. Ask us for more information.

Today's spectacles and sunglasses can be ordered with a variety of precision engineered coatings that perform specific roles. With so many options to choose from, it's important to consider which coatings best match your lifestyle.

Popular lens coatings include anti-reflective layers, which prevent reflections or dazzle from wet roads or the headlamp beams of oncoming vehicles. Transparent scratch-proof coatings are ideal for further extending the lifespan of today's hard-wearing polycarbonate lenses.

Always bring your glasses along to eye examinations, so we can make sure they're still providing clear vision. Most people with glasses will have experienced the embarrassing phenomenon of misting, when the lenses fog up during

