

PROTECT PATIENTS WITH SPECIALTY LENSES

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FOLLOW THESE SIX TIPS TO PERSUADE PATIENTS TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIALTY LENSES AND EYEWEAR

IT HAPPENS daily in many practices: A patient happily purchases a new pair of glasses but forgoes beneficial ophthalmic lenses and/or a pair of sunglasses. A theory for this is that consumers view these products as a luxury vs. a necessity. The 2010 Vision Council Report, “Protection for the Naked Eye; Sunglasses as a Health Necessity” provided this theory, as 65% of consumers said they viewed sunwear as a fashion accessory vs. a critical health necessity. In fact, one in four adults reported they rarely or never wear sunglasses when going outside. We, as optometrists, and our staff have the power to change this thinking, and this power is patient education.

Here, I discuss how, specifically, to educate your patients that polarized and photochromic lenses, blue-light-protective coatings and sunwear are a necessity.

1 USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Use your practice’s social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) accounts to provide *specific* links to information regarding the importance of protecting one’s eyes from UV rays and digital devices. Be sure to include the specialty sunglasses and anti-digital eyestrain lenses necessary for optimum eye health. (See Vision Optique’s Twitter and YouTube profiles for examples, along with this part of our website on digital eye health: www.visionoptique.com/eye-health-library/.)

2 UTILIZE THE APPOINTMENT CALL

When a staff member finalizes an appointment, have him or her say, “Mrs. Smith, please bring your current clear glasses, sunglasses, computer or reading glasses and contact lens prescription, so our doctors can evaluate visual changes and prescribe the latest lens technology.”

This dialogue sets the stage for the discussion on the importance of UV, blue-light protective and computer eyewear.

3 ASK ABOUT DIGITAL DEVICE USAGE

In your patient history form, include the following questions and description, so your patients recognize the influence of digital device use on their eyes:

- *On average, how many hours a day do you look at your computer monitors?*
- *How many monitors are on your desk?*
- *Do you have both a smart phone and tablet? How many hours a day do you spend looking at them combined? (This total includes all activities: reading, playing games and watching movies.)*
- *Can you see your phone and tablet with your sunglasses on when outdoors?*
- *Out of all of your reading on a typical day, how many hours are spent on reading printed material, such as physical books, newspapers or printed documents at work?*
- *Are you experiencing any of these symptoms: eye strain, eye fatigue and tiredness, dryness, blurred*

vision, neck and shoulder pain, lower back pain and headache?

The high-energy visible (HEV) blue-violet light emitted from all digital devices causes these symptoms, which is now identified by an official medical term — digital eye strain. In addition, this HEV blue light has been discovered to harm the retina, which is responsible for converting light for visual recognition. The cumulative effect of this can prematurely induce retinal degenerative diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration. Specialty lenses are now available to let you see the display screens clearly in the sun while protecting your eyes against the harmful blue light, and they address digital eye strain symptoms. Our doctors will discuss and prescribe the right ones for you, if needed, after your exam.

4 SCREEN DURING PRELIMINARY TESTING

Have your staff screen and educate your patients on UV and harmful blue light, while they are reviewing the current performance of a patient's glasses and/or contact lenses. Questions they should ask:

- “Do you have sunglasses with your most current prescription? Are you happy with your vision out of them?”
- “Do you wear non-prescription sunglasses? Are the lenses polarized?”

Also, provide this explanation:

“Sunlight emits a wide spectrum of rays, including ultraviolet, referred to as UV and blue light. The long-term cumulative effects of UV light include skin cancer and age-related cataracts. In the past few years, all major lens manufacturers have designed specialty lenses to include blue light-blocking coatings in addition to UV and anti-glare coatings. Our doctors will prescribe the best outdoor UV and blue-light protective lenses at the end of your exam.”

5 PRESCRIBE SPECIALTY LENSES

By the time a doctor sees these patients, they should be thinking about the effects of UV rays and digital device use on their eyes. Keep this thought process going by reviewing each patient's exposure and



prescribing (*not* recommending) specialty lenses to match the patient's lifestyle need.

An overview of what to prescribe:

- **Glasses-only patients.** Clear glasses with UV/blue-light protection and sunglasses with UV (polarized) and blue-light protective lenses
- **Digital eyestrain symptom patients.** Computer or anti-digital eyestrain lenses with blue-light protective coatings/material, in addition to their regular glasses
- **Glasses-only patients who refuse multiple pairs.** Photochromic lenses with blue-light protective coatings/material in different lens color choices
- **Contact lens wearers.** Several choices are available: Plano blue-light protection lenses to be worn over their contact lenses; +0.25 OU or +0.50 OU for heavy digital device users or older patients; and special anti-digital eye strain lenses

It's always helpful for doctors to repeat the treatment summary in front of the patient when the care is transferred to the optical staff to reinforce the importance and the medical benefit of the prescription.

6 HAVE THE OPTICAL STAFF SUMMARIZE

Once you, the doctor, hand the patient off to a member of your optical staff, have the optical staff member summarize the benefits of UV and blue-

light protection:

“Dr. Shen Lee prescribed this lens to provide you with three benefits: (1) front and backside UV protection, so you reduce the occurrence of early wrinkles, skin cancer and cataracts; (2) anti-glare, anti-scratch and anti-smudge coatings, so you see very clearly out of the lens; and (3) blue-light protection, so your eyes are less tired when using digital devices and your retinas are protected.”

SHIELDING PATIENTS

When patients understand the damaging effect of UV radiation and harmful blue light, they become interested in learning about preventative options, so they no longer see sunwear and specialty lenses as a luxury, but a necessity. Why not try the six steps outlined above to protect your patients' eyes? **OM**



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