

Benefits Spotlight

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What You Need to Know About Eyes and Sun Damage

After a cold, long winter, few things feel better than the warm sun on your face. But when it comes to the sun, too much of a good thing is just that. Most of us know the sun can harm our skin, but failing to protect your eyes can cause serious problems, too.

Everyone—young and old—may develop eye problems from failing to use the proper eye protection against the sun. The more time you spend in the sun without eye protection, the greater your risk for harming your eyesight. Knowing how the sun can damage your eyes is the first step to protecting yourself; knowing the best shields to block damaging rays is the second.

The bottom line? Sugar substitutes like xylitol and stevia can help you safely reduce the amount of sugar in your diet, which will promote your oral and overall health. However, these are not miracle products. Sugar or substitute, your teeth need a twice-daily regimen of brushing and flossing to stay healthy.

How the Sun Can Harm Your Vision

The two types of rays produced by the sun—UV-A and UV-B—can damage your vision in different ways if you regularly expose your eyes to them.

UV-A rays can harm a part of your retina located in the back of your eye, while UV-B rays can affect your lens and cornea, which are located in the front of your eye. While both rays can cause problems, UV-B rays are responsible for creating the most destruction to your eyesight.

Several of the most common and life-altering eye diseases may be caused by the sun, including macular degeneration (a top cause of vision loss in older adults), cataracts (a clouding of the lens in the front of the eye) and skin cancer around the eyelids.

Sunglasses and Sunhats: The Best Shields Against the Sun's Rays

Caps or brimmed hats offer an effective barrier against sun damage, as they ward off about half of the sun's harmful rays. However, the most obvious way to protect your eyes from the sun's rays is to always wear sunglasses when you're outside.

While you don't need to get prescription sunglasses to protect yourself, knowing a few tips will ensure you purchase a pair that offers top protection:

- Only buy products that carry a label stating that the glasses block 99-100% of UV-A and UV-B rays (if the glasses don't provide a statement indicating the percentage of rays they can block, do not buy).
- Purchase darker-tinted sunglasses if using them in water or snowy setting, as these environments reflect more light.
- Try before you buy: If the sunglasses are not comfortable, you'll be less likely to wear them on a regular basis.

During the warmer months, there's no better place to be than outside—whether on the beach or at a backyard BBQ. If you plan to soak up the sun this season and have questions about buying the right pair of sunglasses, your eye doctor is a great source of information—and not just on prescription sunglasses. He or she can provide additional advice on buying eyewear that blocks the sun's rays from interfering in your outdoor fun.



Sources

<https://www.preventblindness.org/protect-your-eyes-sun>

Electric Toothbrush 101

At a recent dental visit, your dental hygienist may have asked “Do you use an electric toothbrush?” Electric, or powered, toothbrushes take some of the work off your hands (quite literally) by powering away plaque and cleaning hard to reach spots. But according to the American Dental Association, both manual and electric toothbrushes are effective at cleaning your teeth.

If a manual toothbrush can adequately clean your teeth, is an electric toothbrush worth the investment? Learn the benefits of these boosted brushes to decide whether they're worth the money.

“For most, a manual toothbrush is sufficient, but there are two major benefits from the electric,” said Dr. Jeffrey Chaffin, Dental Director for Delta Dental of Iowa. “For those with trouble brushing, the electric toothbrush is easier for them, especially when they have dexterity issues. The second advantage is that it does motivate some to brush more often and for longer — as some of these have timers and apps — so even though they may be able to adequately use manual brush, the electronic one may motivate them.”

Electric toothbrushes boast more bells and whistles than their manual counterparts. Some models have timers to help you brush for the recommended two minutes, sensors that let you know you're brushing too hard, and some are so powerful they can remove plaque off your teeth without making contact with your tooth.

But those perks come at a price: The priciest electric toothbrushes cost well over \$100. If you're accustomed to spending a few bucks every couple of months for a manual toothbrush, that investment may be hard to swallow.

Fortunately, not all electric toothbrushes are cost prohibitive. You can still get a powerful clean without shelling out a lot of money.

"The more expensive brushes tend to have better motion to the brush head, resulting in a better cleaning ability," Dr. Chaffin said. "But it all comes down to how one uses the brush, and there can be a benefit for any price range."

Manual toothbrushes need to be replaced periodically, and electric brushes are no different — an important consideration when weighing costs.

"Like a manual toothbrush, the head/brush should be replaced every two to three months, or earlier if serious wear is noted," Dr. Chaffin said.



The bottom line: Both manual and electric toothbrushes effectively keep your teeth clean and healthy. Electric versions may help you be more compliant to oral health recommendations (like brushing for a full minutes), but ultimately, whatever product keeps you brushing twice each day is the right one for you.

Sources

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