

Benefits Spotlight

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Q&A with Dr. Chad: Vision Basics

Seeing clearly isn't always clear cut. You may have perfect vision, but you still need to take preventive steps to protect the long-term health of your eyes.

Here, Delta Dental of Iowa's Dr. Chad Overman, Director of Vision Benefits, gets back to the basics of optimal eye care by answering our top vision questions below.

Q: How often should I see my eye doctor if I use corrective lenses? How often should I go if my vision is perfect?

Dr. Chad: Regardless if you have good vision, you should see your eye doctor every year. Many eye and vision issues can be detected in very early stages if you get an annual eye exam. And, the earlier you find a problem, the easier it is to treat and correct.

Q: Why would I see an eye doctor if I don't need vision correction?

Dr. Chad: Most eye health-related issues do not initially cause pain or blurriness, so it is possible to have a health condition without even really knowing it. You may not have any vision complaints, but your eye doctor will check you for those conditions that do not cause blurriness or obvious vision problems initially.

Q: I have vision loss in my family history. What steps should I take to ensure I have healthy vision as I age?

Dr. Chad: Knowing whether you have a family history of vision loss is important, as vision loss may be inherited. The best way to preserve healthy eyesight is to schedule your yearly eye examinations with your eye doctor to monitor any vision changes you may have as you age.

Q: What happens if I wear my disposable contact lenses past the recommended timeline?

Dr. Chad: Wearing your disposable contact lenses past their recommended timeline doesn't just make your contact lenses feel less comfortable, it also deprives your cornea (the clear layer at the front of the eye) of much-needed oxygen. The older the contact lenses are, the less oxygen passing to the cornea. This can lead to cornea swelling and eventually painful sores and/or scarring. Follow the recommended disposal schedule for your contact lenses to keep your eyes healthy.

Q: What do I need to know about the different types of eye care professionals (optometrists, ophthalmologists, opticians)?

Dr. Chad: Optometrists perform most routine eye examinations and may refer you to an ophthalmologist (a provider with advanced medical training) if you require additional treatment or surgery. Opticians will help fit you properly with glasses but do not perform eye exams.

Q: What types of vision problems warrant a call to the doctor?

Dr. Chad: Any sudden changes in vision should be reported to your eye doctor, along with flashes of light or floaters that suddenly appear. Blurriness, double vision, pain and headaches also warrant a call to your eye doctor, who will investigate further and rule out anything serious.

Q: What other advice can you share on general ways to protect the long-term health of your eyes and vision?

Dr. Chad: Every day, wear your sunglasses outdoors, keep your lids and lashes clean, limit the number of hours you look at a digital device, eat healthy foods with plenty of green, leafy vegetables and fish oil (fish oil supplements are good, too). And, each year, keep your eye appointment to ensure any issues are caught early!

How Intermittent Fasting Affects Your Oral Health

Intermittent fasting isn't a new way of eating, but it has been steadily gaining in popularity recently for its ability to burn fat and help people lose weight. It's different from most types of diets in that the focus isn't on what you eat, it's when you eat. A diet that allows you to eat what you love – just in a restricted time period – is appealing to a lot of people who don't want to cut out their favorite foods.

During intermittent fasting, you choose a period when you fast (you can consume non-caloric beverages, such as water and black coffee, during the fasting period) and when you eat. Intermittent fasting isn't one-size-fits-all. Some people eat for 8 hours a day and fast for 16 hours; others eat for 4 hours a day and fast for 20. There are many types of intermittent fasting diets, but the concept is the same: To deprive the body of food for long enough that it has nothing else to burn but fat.

Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting is designed to help people lose weight, but there are other benefits as well – some of which directly affect your oral health. Some studies show that intermittent fasting improves memory and supports heart health. Evidence has also pointed to the diet's ability to reduce inflammation throughout the body, which can translate to lower rates of gum disease.

Things to Consider Before Starting a Fasting Diet

When faced with a restricted window of time to eat, you may be tempted to binge on high-calorie foods. Doing so will erase any health benefits of a fasting diet. You still need to focus on eating a nutritious diet with a variety of produce, dairy and lean protein. A nutritious diet also reduces your risk of developing oral health problems, including cavities and gum disease.

It's also important to understand that fasting can bring about some negative side effects, especially if you're new to fasting. Hunger and fatigue are common and expected side effects of a fast, and this can also lead to stress. If you struggle to maintain your stress, that can lead to oral health problems such as teeth grinding, jaw pain and mouth sores.

Your Doctor Can Help You Design Your Ideal Fasting Plan

Intermittent fasting may not be safe for everyone, including children, pregnant women and those with certain medical conditions. Before starting a fasting diet, talk to your doctor. He or she will give you the green light and may even suggest a safe and effective fasting schedule for you.

SOURCE:

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/intermittent-fasting-what-is-it-and-how-does-it-work>