

Myth-busting the Top Ten Old Wives' Tales about eyes

Old wives' tales explained



THE COLLEGE
OF OPTOMETRISTS

- **Wearing someone else's glasses may damage your eyes.**
False: Although you may not be able to see very well with them and may get a headache or double vision, you won't come to any harm from wearing glasses that are not your prescription (unless you're driving a motor vehicle).
- **Watching TV too much or too closely will damage your eyes.**
False: Watching too much TV or sitting very close to it may make your eyes tired or give you a headache - particularly if you are watching TV in the dark when you are effectively looking at a moving light, like a torch - but won't cause any serious permanent damage.
- **Masturbation makes you go blind.**
False: The only correlation between the two is that semen contains a large amount of zinc and a deficiency in zinc (although nearly impossible to achieve solely by masturbating) will cause a decline in a person's vision.
- **Cutting your eyelashes off or putting Vaseline on them makes them grow back or appear fuller.**
False: Cutting your eyelashes off makes you look like an idiot and your eyelashes do not grow back fuller. Putting Vaseline on them only gives you a greasy pillowcase.
- **Exercising the eye muscles can allow you to 'throw away your glasses'.**
False: People (normally) need specs because of the shape and size of their eye (i.e. their eyes are too big or too small). Exercises won't help this.
- **Not wearing your glasses will make you depend upon them less.**
False: If you don't wear your glasses you may become more accustomed to the blur and won't remember how bad it is, and thereby think that your eyes have got better (when they haven't).
- **By looking at the patterns, colours and other characteristics of the iris you can tell what health problems a person has.**
False: There is no scientific proof for this. However, when an optometrist carries out an eye examination they will not only test your sight, but will also check the health of your eyes and look for signs of some general health problems.
- **Eating carrots will improve your eyesight.**
Some truth: Carrots are a source of vitamin A, which is important for the eyes. However, before you embark on an all-carrot diet to improve your vision, note that it is more important for eye health to have a good balanced diet that supports your all-round health. Poor nutrition has been

implicated in diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

- **Using your eyes too much can wear them out.**

False: They will last for your whole life if they are healthy (or have conditions that are treatable). The health of your eyes has nothing to do with the number of hours you use them.

- **Holding books up close will damage a child's eyes.**

False: Where or how your child holds a book has no effect on the health of the eyes or the need for glasses. Sometimes children find it more comfortable to read close-up and their very good focusing ability makes it easy for them to do so.