

# Spring and Summer Eyecare Tips

BY DR. THOMAS P. FINLEY, OPTOMETRIST

## Spring will soon become summer.

Even though temperatures fluctuate from one day to another, one thing seems constant in our area, a high pollen count. Many people experience the discomfort accompanying allergy season.

If you're affected by seasonal allergies and experience red, itchy, puffy, or watery eyes, relief is in sight. Many new anti-allergy eye drops and therapies are now available to help soothe your eyes and decrease the annoying symptoms that occur. Inform your eye doctor of your symptoms so they can help you survive allergy season (which in our area can last all 12 months of the year) as best as possible.

One good and simple remedy combating eye allergy problems is cold compresses. Place a few ice cubes in a zip lock bag, close your eyes and rest the compress on your eyelids for ten minutes. The first minute is shockingly cold, but afterwards, a nice "numbing" effect takes place. This helps minimize feelings of "needing" to rub your eyes, which only makes itching worse. Cold compresses also decrease swelling and help constrict blood vessels around the eye, slowing histamine release that causes itching. For young children, it's often easier using cold compresses than fighting to get drops in their eyes.

People wearing contact lenses may be more susceptible to some eye allergies. Contact lenses must be kept extremely clean so pollens won't adhere to them. Switching to a more frequently replaced lens like daily disposables keeps clean lenses on the eyes at all times and helps guard against allergic conjunctivitis and other problems. Daily disposable contact lenses are the healthiest and most convenient contact lenses available,

and require no solutions which can also trigger allergic reactions. Swimming with contact lenses is extremely dangerous and increases the risk of serious sight threatening eye infections. Always remove your contact lenses before swimming.

## Protection Against the Sun

Bright sunlight causes us to squint which can strain our eyes, but the truly harmful effects of the sun may not show themselves for years. Quality sunglasses prevent dangerous ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun from damaging our eyes. Long-term exposure to UV rays can cause early cataracts, skin cancers around the eyes and macular degeneration.

Eyeglass wearers should have Transition lenses that darken outdoors, sunglass "clip-ons" over clear glasses, or a second pair of prescription sunglasses. Everyone else should have a good quality pair of sunglasses to protect their eyes; not the cheap dime store ones you lose every week. This is especially important for children who spend significantly more time outdoors during the summer months exposed to harmful UV rays.

## Protection Against Injuries

With warmer weather comes an increase in outdoor activities: sports, yard work and just being outside having fun. Sports involving bats, racquets and fast moving objects (baseball, softball, tennis, basketball, paint ball, golf) are high on the eye injury list and can cause serious sight threatening damage. Protection with impact resistant lenses is essential. Also, chores like mowing the grass or weed whacking can cause a projectile shot of a rock or stone at such a high velocity that it will cause severe injury to your eye.



Make certain to wear protective goggles or that your sunglasses have impact resistant lenses.

Beware of fireworks. Firecrackers are responsible for many eye injuries every year. Common sense is crucial to prevent eye accidents, especially among children.

Enjoy the spring and summer, but protect your eyes and vision also. Take advantage of the many eye wear and vision care options available to make you more comfortable, provide better eye health and even make a great fashion statement.



**Dr. Thomas P. Finley** received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Francis University in Pennsylvania, and his Doctorate of Optometry from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Following graduation, he served as an optometry officer in the United States Air Force and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Finley has served as an adjunct clinical professor for three optometry schools, and has been a clinical investigator for two major contact lens companies. He has published several articles in professional and trade journals and local newspapers and has also lectured at educational conferences.

Dr. Finley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Fellow of the Virginia Academy of Optometry, and a member of the American Optometric Association, Virginia Optometric Association, and Northern Virginia Optometric Society. He is an Advisory Board member for TLC Laser Eye Centers.

Locally, Dr. Finley serves as an active member of the Herndon Rotary Club (past president), Chamber of Commerce (past board member), Optimist Club (youth sports' coach), and Knights of Columbus (past board member). He serves on the board of the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic. He was awarded Herndon's "Distinguished Service Award," the Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business of the Year Award," and The Times Newspapers "Best Eye Doctor Award." He has owned his Herndon optometry practice since 1989.

Dr. Finley was recently recognized by the Virginia Optometric Association as Distinguished Optometrist of the Year.

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