



# Chelmer Village Opticians

*Great eye-care at the heart of the Village*

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## A FEAST FOR THE EYES

Like all the important organs in your body, your eyes need a balanced diet to do their best work. Recent medical research has revealed some interesting facts about how our diet helps our eyes to repair minor damage, fight off infections and function efficiently.

Analysis by the RNIB has established that obesity can double the risk of developing some common causes of blindness. These include an acceleration of the most common factor behind adult blindness - age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy are other degenerative eye conditions which are related to poor nutrition or inadequate supplies of antioxidants.

The overall theme that good body health leads to good eye health is also supported by evidence that regular exercise actively helps your vision. When you exercise, your cardiovascular system works harder; this boosts circulation, which is vitally important for all the blood vessels in your eyes.

Maintaining good nutrition and a balanced diet helps to protect the retina against damage done by smoking, alcohol, pollution and ultraviolet rays. One of the key ingredients for healthy eyes is an antioxidant called lutein. Doctors suggest we need 6-10mg a day of this micro-nutrient, which neutralises the harmful effects of free radicals. The best source of lutein is spinach, with kale leaves also a useful resource, and experts additionally recommend a diet full of vitamins A, C and E. Foods such as oranges, grapefruit, tomatoes and peppers, nuts, dairy produce and eggs all contribute to a lutein-rich diet.

Where diet alone is not an adequate source, a range of nutritional supplements is available, specifically aimed at improving the health of your eyes. Our optometrist will be able to advise you on how to take the best care your eyes.

For more information, or to make an appointment, please contact us at:

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## MONITOR YOUR SIGHT

Along with poor lighting, regular computer use is one of the biggest causes of discomfort for your eyes. Headaches, uncomfortable dryness of the eyes, mental tiredness and a gradual loss of sharp vision throughout the day are all tell-tale signs that prolonged computer use might be contributing to undue strain on your eyesight.

Millions of us rely on computers to do our jobs, and many people unwind after a long day by web-surfing or instant messaging. Numerous studies have proved that looking at a monitor doesn't damage your eyesight in itself, but like so many things in life, doing it to excess can be unhealthy. The eyes were not intended to stare fixedly at a screen for hours on end, so if this is part of your daily life, how can you ease the burden on your eyes?

Firstly, adjust your seating position as you would in a car. Set your monitor and seat up so that the centre of the screen is around two feet away and positioned slightly below your natural eye level. Adjust the screen brightness so that it isn't too piercing or dull. If necessary change the standard font size on your computer; bigger text will be easier to read. Don't be tempted to squint in order to see things clearly, since muscle fatigue will almost inevitably follow.



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Lighting is a crucial component in avoiding eye strain. If your computer is near a window, could sunshine make it hard to see things clearly? Harsh artificial lighting is another potential problem, especially in the office; full spectrum lighting is much better for you than standard bulbs or striplights, since it gives a more accurate representation of real daylight. It's also considered helpful in reducing seasonal affective disorder.

Other things you can do to reduce eye fatigue include taking a few minutes away from the screen every hour, giving your eyes a chance to focus on more distant objects. When we stare at things, we tend to blink less, but regular blinking helps to prevent the surface of our eyes from drying out. Contact lens users are particularly susceptible to this, although lubricant eye drops can also be used to help restore the tear film layer. Screen filters reduce glare in bright environments, and it's important to keep dust off your monitor - it's much harder to see the screen clearly through a layer of grime. Larger desktop screens also reduce the likelihood of eye strain, and flat screens are less prone to reflections and distortion.

If you habitually use a computer screen, legislation obliges your employer to provide and pay for regular eye examinations and to contribute towards any spectacles which may be required specifically for computer use at work. Make sure that you take advantage of this opportunity to keep a regular check on the health of your eyes.



**You might decide to have the best of both worlds and use spectacles and contact lenses in different situations.**



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By contrast, contact lenses are slightly more time consuming, and it takes a little while to get used to putting them in and taking them out. However, this process soon becomes as natural as removing make-up or jewellery. Daily disposables (individually suspended in a neutral solution and ready to wear without any cleaning or maintenance) are a quick and easy way into the world of contact lenses. Their high water content and oxygen-permeable design make them so comfortable to wear that you'll completely forget about their presence.

Ultimately, you might decide to have the best of both worlds and use spectacles and contact lenses in different situations. Combining the two options can allow someone with a varied lifestyle to be completely comfortable in every activity. If you still can't decide, come into the practice, and our optician will be happy to help you make the right choices for your lifestyle.

## THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

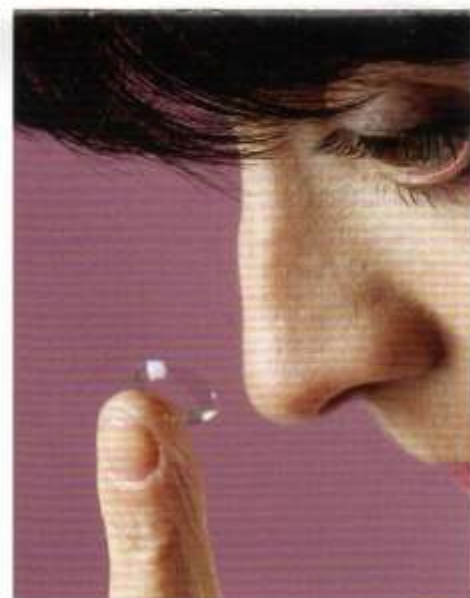
It's a dilemma that many patients face following an eye examination: whether to choose spectacles or contact lenses? Some people may have already made up their minds on this matter, but for the undecided, here's our beginner's guide to choosing between these two quite different options.

If your preference is for spectacles, the most crucial element is finding a pair that suits you, and this is a very subjective issue. A lot depends on your facial characteristics – dainty features suit small, curved frames, whereas a more masculine jawline can be set off nicely against a pair of larger, chunky glasses. From rimless rectangles to ostentatious ovals, modern spectacle

design has never been more varied or fashionable, and a well-chosen pair can provide the finishing style statement for any face, particularly for aficionados of designer brands. Clever frame choice can actually highlight your eyebrows and cheekbones as well, by subtly drawing attention to them.

Conversely, if your eyes are one of your best features, contact lenses will show them off to best advantage. In the same way that some people prefer to wear spectacles for specific scenarios (such as driving), contact lenses are invaluable in many other situations. Typical examples include playing sports or pursuing certain hobbies, and if you have an outdoor job there's much to be said for not having to worry about raindrops obscuring your view. Indeed, contact lenses work best when worn outdoors, rather than staring at a computer screen for hours on end. In contrast, this is one situation where spectacles may be more comfortable, and you'll find a feature on safe computer usage elsewhere in this issue.

Spectacles are low maintenance, and regular cleaning with an anti-static lint-free cloth should keep them in excellent condition.



# WHEN CATARACTS ATTACK



Situated behind the coloured part of your eye, the lens is a clear piece of tissue, through which light passes. Cataracts are hazy patches in the lens, which block daylight in a similar way to clouds blocking sunlight.

As the most common cause of impaired vision throughout the world, cataracts are a problem many of us may have to face one day. Although they are potentially capable of causing blindness, cataracts can be easily dealt with, and like so many medical issues, the key to successful treatment is recognising the symptoms as early as possible.

Situated behind the coloured part of your eye, the lens is a clear piece of tissue, through which light passes. Cataracts are hazy patches in the lens, which block daylight in a similar way to clouds blocking sunlight. Eventually, the lens will become so misty that light can filter through but it becomes impossible to focus on detail, and the cloudier the lens becomes, the more your eyesight will be impaired.

Although they can be present in newborn babies, cataracts are more usually associated with the older generations - a recent study found that 30 per cent of British pensioners had them - and they are equally common in men and women.

Because of their gradual development, it can take years for a person to notice the deterioration in their vision. Using an instrument called an ophthalmoscope, which directs a bright light through the lens of each eye and picks up the telltale cloudiness, your optometrist will be able to detect them during a routine eye examination, which is why regular checks are important.

Cataracts often develop in both eyes, but at different rates of progression. Particular indicators about the onset of problems include difficulty seeing in very dim or bright conditions, discomfort when facing towards strong light, a washing-out of colours and problems focusing on written words or a TV picture. Other symptoms can include halos around light sources and double vision, although these are comparatively rare side effects.

Although experts are uncertain about the exact cause of cataracts, there are measures you can take to reduce the risk of them developing. A healthy balanced

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diet is one key factor in helping to avoid cataracts, as is not smoking. Wearing sunglasses or a wide-brimmed or peaked cap can also make a big difference, since they protect the eyes from having to filter out the damaging UV rays of harsh sunlight.

If you do develop cataracts, medical treatment involves a small operation, usually under local anaesthetic as an outpatient. With liquid drops helping to dilate the pupil, a surgeon breaks down the lens into tiny pieces using ultrasound before those fragments are sucked out through a small incision in the cornea. A bespoke artificial lens is then inserted, designed to remain in place permanently. It's frequently possible to go home almost as soon as surgery is over, and recuperation should be straightforward, other than avoiding any strenuous activities for the first couple of days.

