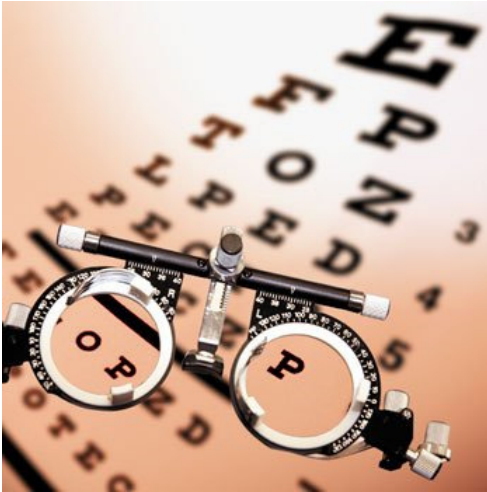


# Seeing eye to eye

If you had Canada's top eye surgeon, Dr. Raymond Stein, cornered for 10 minutes, what would you ask him?

RON JOHNSON



**DR. RAYMOND STEIN** is a pioneer in the development of laser eye surgery, having more than 20 years of experience and having performed more than 80,000 surgeries. In addition to his work at Bochner Eye Institute, Dr. Stein is also chief of ophthalmology at the Scarborough Hospital in Toronto and a cornea consultant at Mount Sinai Hospital.

## **My kid loves to read in the dark. Is that bad for her eyes?**

There are a number of old wives' tales, and that is one of them. There is no problem reading in dark, but as we get older, we generally need good light in order to see well. When you're young, you have the ability to see up close very well and can see in the dark just fine. I think that was developed because moms and dads wanted their kids to go to sleep.

## **Is that the same for sitting too close to the TV?**

Yes, it is similar to reading in the dark. There is really no harm in sitting close to the TV. But if parents observe that their child is always really close, there is a good chance that child is nearsighted and may require glasses or contacts.

## **What about carrots?**

There are a number of vitamins and nutritional supplements that are helpful for normal eye health. I think, just a normal diet, three meals a day with vegetables and fruit, nuts and protein, and you'll get everything you need. Beta carotene, which is in carrots, has been shown to be helpful for normal health of the retina. So, they are helpful, but if you don't eat carrots, but have a normal diet, you're going to be fine.

## **What about e-readers and iPads?**

There is no concrete evidence that e-readers are bad for eyes, both the older traditional models or the new iPad. I think, if it encourages one to read more, that is a very positive thing.

## **When should children get their first eye checkup?**

The pediatrician or general family doctor is going to do superficial checks to make sure the child can fixate with each eye. So generally, if the family doctor or pediatrician feels they can fixate each eye and see straight, then age three or four is a good time to have a child's eyes checked. Certainly as a parent, if you notice eyes turning in or turning out or that the child is too close to the TV, really at any age bring the child in.

## **Looking into the future, do you see a time when glasses and contacts will be a thing of the past?**

I think we are getting close to it now. I've been doing laser surgery for almost 20 years. In the early days, it was just the high-risk takers. But today, more and more patients are interested in laser eye surgery: generally from age 18 to 65, if their eyes are healthy. We are not just seeing risk takers any more. The most conservative individuals are having laser eye surgery done. But looking into the future, certainly for distance, glasses and contacts will still be fairly common, because of the expense of having laser eye surgery, but more and more will have it done.

**What are the risks of laser eye surgery?**

Today, the risks have certainly decreased with the use of a laser, for making a flap, instead of a blade.... The most common risk is an under or an over correction, and it can easily be managed by a second treatment. This is less than two per cent of cases. There could also be inflammation under the lasik flap, which would be treated by topical steroids, usually for a week or two. Corneal infections or ulcers are extremely rare.

**Why do eyes twitch? I get that a lot.**

There are a number of reasons. The most common are stress, caffeine use or some irritation of the ocular surface that stimulates the lid.

**With our wired world, will future generations have more eye problems?**

There have been some studies looking at why some patients are nearsighted and others aren't in different communities and different countries. When people do an inordinate amount of close work on computers, reading, cellphone, e-mail, this increases the risk in developing myopia, nearsightedness, when compared to kids outside doing sports or working on the farm. This has certainly been found to be true in countries around the world. I suspect in the future, if it continues, there will be an increase in myopia worldwide.