

Physical activity and eye health



**NATIONAL EYE
HEALTH WEEK**
MONDAY 23 – SUNDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2019
YOUR VISION MATTERS

GET ACTIVE FOR YOUR EYES

Exercise is crucial for so many areas of our health, including our eye health.

Being physically active has been shown to reduce your risk of visual impairment by 58 per cent, compared to somebody with a sedentary lifestyle.

Regular exercise has been shown to increase antioxidant enzyme activity and increase resistance to oxidative stress.

As well as being a key component to systemic conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, oxidative stress can also increase your risk of many common eye conditions including age-related macular degeneration (AMD) – the UK’s leading cause of blindness, age-related cataracts and dry eye disease.

Our eyes need oxygen to stay healthy and comfortable, and physical activity plays a key role in this; aerobic exercise can help increase oxygen supplies to the optic nerve and lower any pressure that builds up in the eye.

This is important in terms of eye health, because reducing intraocular ‘eye’ pressure can help control conditions such as glaucoma and ocular hypertension.

Regular exercise can also improve blood flow to the retina and the optic nerve and has been found to help prevent the progression of diabetes, which, in severe cases, can lead to diabetic retinopathy and total sight loss.

Public Health England (PHE) recommends that all adults aged 19 to 64 years should aim for 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity, in bouts of 10 minutes or more every week.

The easiest way to approach this is to do 30 minutes of moderate exercise on at least five days each week. In terms of which exercises, brisk walks, cycling, dancing and swimming are all excellent ways to reduce intraocular pressure and maintain healthy eyes.

www.visionmatters.org.uk