As we move about from day to day working and enjoying activities either outside or inside, many of us take our eyes for granted and feel that they will always allow us to see what and when we want. However, eyes need to be cared for on a regular basis just like the rest of the body. Caring for eyes properly starts with getting them checked regularly, especially if health issues such as high blood pressure and diabetes are a problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), May is Healthy Vision Month. So, in order to bring this topic to the forefront of our minds, this month’s issue of Health and Safety News is devoted to what the CDC shares about eye health. The web address consulted is http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyVision/index.html. For any information that appears in blue type, please right click the mouse and select Open Hyperlink to read more.
Healthy Vision: Make It Last a Lifetime

Taking care of your vision should be a priority just like eating healthy and physical activity. Healthy vision can help keep you safe when you are driving, while at work, home, or school, participating in sports, or taking part in recreational activities. Healthy Vision Month and the CDC's Vision Health Initiative (VHI) partner with the National Eye Institute to encourage all Americans to make vision a health priority. To keep your eyes healthy, get a comprehensive dilated eye exam. An eye care professional will examine your eyes for signs of vision problems or eye diseases. It's the best way to find out if you need glasses or contacts, or are in the early stages of any eye-related diseases.

You should have a dilated eye exam regularly to check for common eye problems. If you haven't had an exam for some time, schedule one this month.

Although older adults tend to have more vision problems, preschoolers may not see as well as they should. Just 1 out of every 7 preschoolers receives an eye exam, and less than 1 out of every 4 receives some type of vision screening. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends vision screening for all children ages 3 to 5 years to find conditions such as amblyopia, or lazy eye that can be treated effectively if caught early.

While some eye conditions, like cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration, can cause vision loss and even blindness, others, such as refractive errors, are common problems easily corrected with glasses or contact lenses. An estimated 11 million Americans age 12 years and older could see better if they used contact lenses or had eye surgery, if appropriate.
There are nine ways you can help protect your vision:

- Get regular comprehensive dilated eye exams.
- Know your family's eye health history. It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with an eye disease or condition, since many are hereditary.
- Eat right to protect your sight—in particular, eat plenty of dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, and fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, albacore tuna, trout, and halibut.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home, such as painting, yard work, and home repairs.
- Quit smoking or never start.
- Wear sunglasses that block 99 percent-100 percent of ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation.
- Clean your hands prior to taking out your contacts and be sure to cleanse your contact lenses properly to avoid infection.
- Practice workplace eye safety.

Taking care of your eyes also may benefit your overall health. People with vision problems are more likely than those with good vision to have diabetes, poor hearing, heart problems, high blood pressure, lower back pain and stroke, as well as have increased risk for falls, injury and depression. Among people aged 65 and older, 54.2 percent of those who are blind and 41.7 percent of those with impaired vision say their overall health is fair or poor. Just 21.5 percent of older Americans without vision problems reported fair to poor health.

In addition to your comprehensive dilated eye exams, visit an eye care professional if you have decreased vision; eye pain; drainage or redness of the eye; double vision; or diabetes; or if you see flashes of light, floaters (tiny specks that appear to float before your eyes), or circles (halos) around light sources.

For this Healthy Vision Month, resolve to take care of your eyes to make them last a lifetime.
Reminder…

The weather is finally becoming warm enough that people want to get out and have fun in the sun and that’s great, but don’t forget to wear the proper sunglasses!