



Maintaining Eye Health

Safeguard your vision by feasting your eyes on these healthy tips from experts.

Nail techs are constantly seeking continuing education and honing their craft in order to take the best care of their clients. Unfortunately, they tend to get a little lax when it comes to taking care of themselves, and one part of their body in particular: their eyes. After all, without proper vision, techs can't create fabulous nail art, sculpt a full set or provide a proper pedicure, no matter how much education there is. So, we've provided you with some steps you can take—simple lifestyle choices, in most cases—that will ensure your eyesight remains sharp over the long haul.

Eye Health Facts*

- According to a national survey, only 35% of respondents said they always wear protective eyewear when performing home repairs or maintenance; even fewer do so while playing sports.
- One warning sign of both high blood pressure and diabetes is when the ability to see clearly changes frequently.
- In 2000, it was estimated that 2.22 million people had primary open-angle glaucoma, a number expected to increase to 3.36 million by 2020.
- Nearly half (44.7%) of all eye injuries occur in the home.
- Women are 24% less likely to be treated for glaucoma.

*Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology (geteyesmart.org)

Maintain overall well-being.

Experts agree: What's good for the body is also good for the eyes, and a well-balanced diet is a must. Colorful fruits and veggies are essential for good vision and help prevent age-related eye diseases, according to Brian Bonanni, MD, director of Gotham LASIK & Skincare in New York. "Consumption of fruits and vegetables containing two carotenoid pigments—lutein and zeaxanthin—may be linked to a reduced risk of age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of loss of vision for people over 55," he explains. This includes broccoli, corn, squash, dark green leafy vegetables (such as spinach and kale), kiwi, grapes and oranges. Of course, exercise goes hand in hand with a healthy diet and leads to a healthier cardiovascular system—essential



because the eye is a vascular organ that needs excellent blood flow to provide adequate oxygen and nutrients, says Bonanni.

Aside from diet and exercise, there are other lifestyle choices that can also lead to improved eye health. James Thimons, OD, clinical director of Ophthalmic Consultants of Connecticut in Fairfield, Connecticut, recommends antioxidant consumption,

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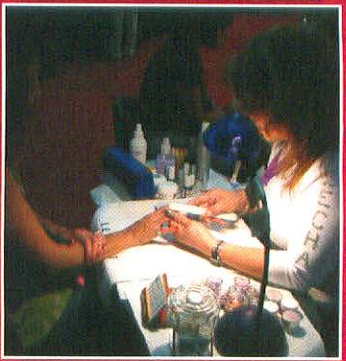
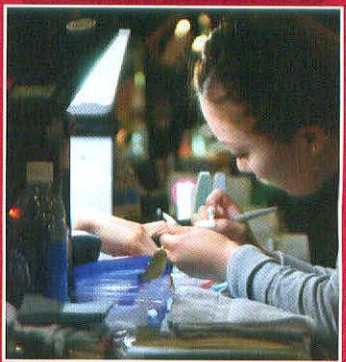
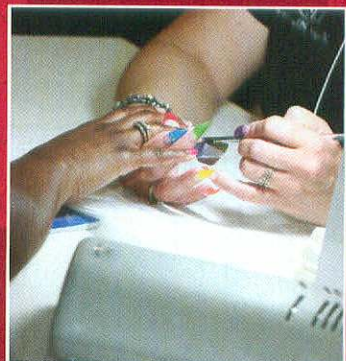
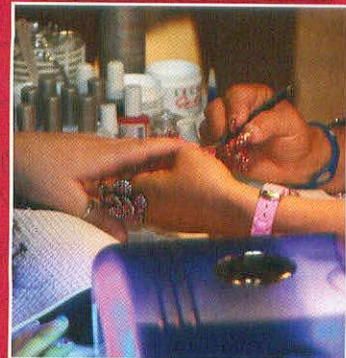
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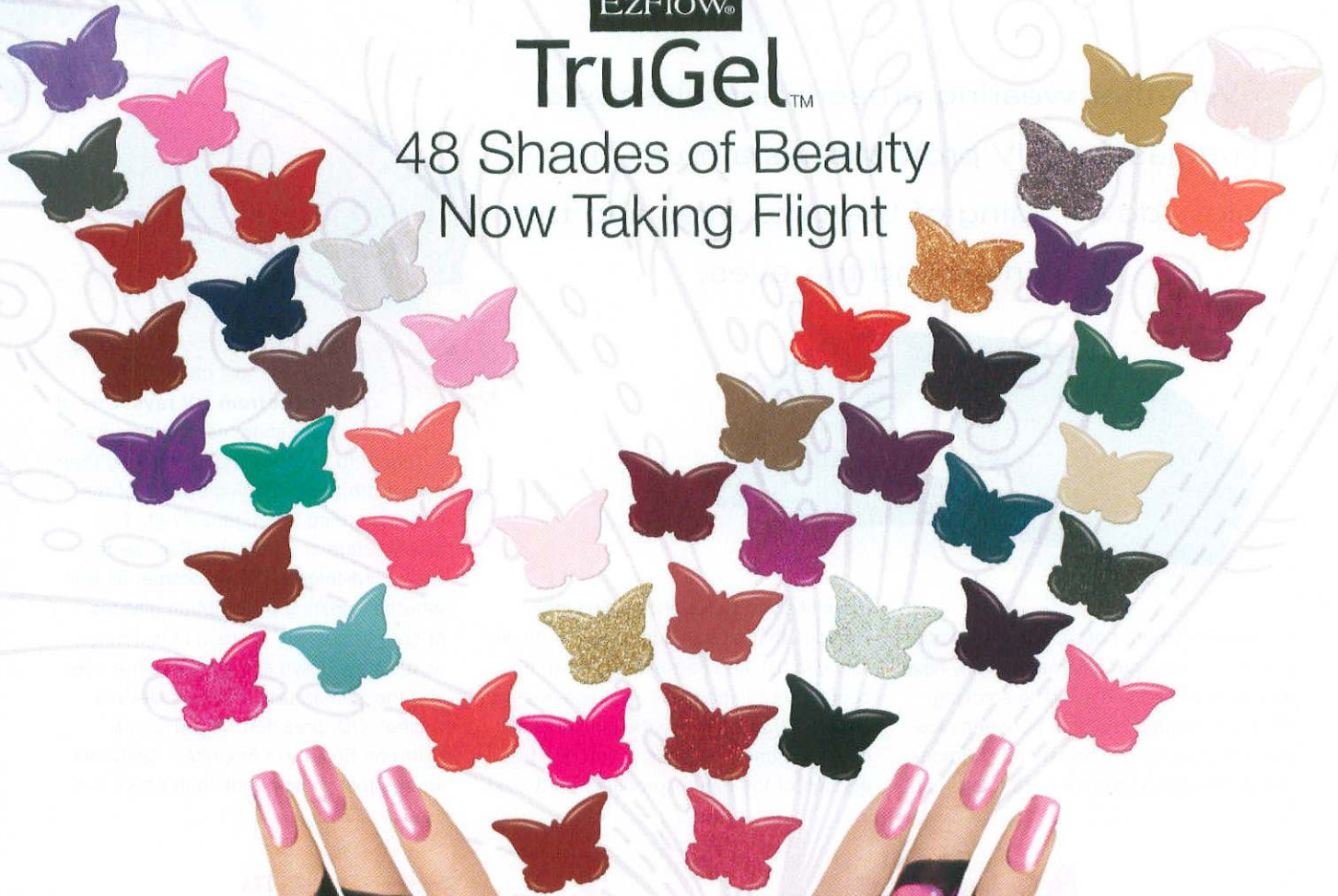
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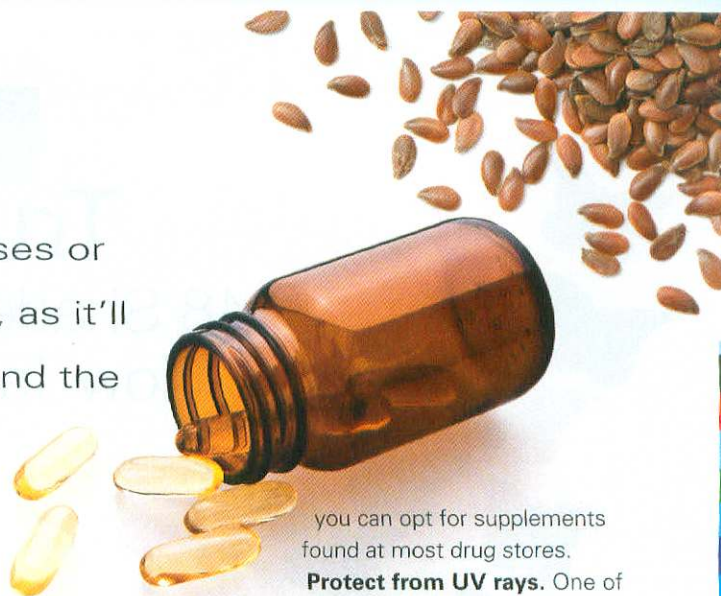
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Whether wearing prescription glasses or sunglasses, UV protection is a must, as it'll slow down aging of both the eyes and the skin around the eyes.



you can opt for supplements found at most drug stores.

Protect from UV rays. One of the worst habits many people have in regard to eye care: not protecting their eyes from the damaging effects of the sun, according to Snigdha Singh, MD, an associate at Castleman Eye Center in Troy, Michigan. She recommends that whether wearing prescription glasses or sunglasses, UV protection is a must, as it'll slow down aging of both the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Jeffrey Anshel, OD, president of the Ocular Nutrition Society in Encinitas, California, agrees that most people don't take eye

a moderate amount of alcohol (a glass or two of red wine per day may actually have a positive effect) and avoiding smoking. "There's a high correlation between nicotine and macular degeneration," Thimons notes. "Those who smoke are four times

more likely to experience vision loss." He adds that omega-3 fatty acids—those found in fish and flaxseed oils—can help counteract the hormonal and age-related changes that decrease the quality of the oil glands on the eyelids. If you don't eat enough of the natural produced fatty acid,

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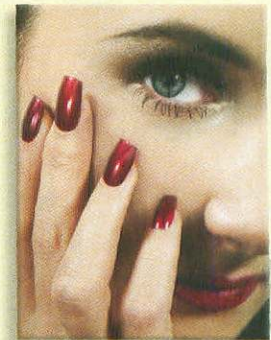
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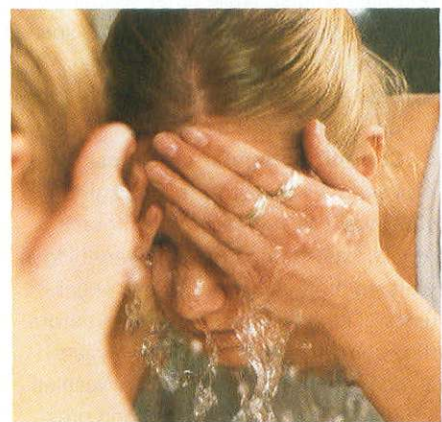


protection seriously—a critical mistake, considering that eyes absorb UV easier than skin.

Wash your face—including your eyes. Make sure to wash your face before bed every night, especially if you wear makeup. "Eye makeup, like mascara or eye shadow, left on at night can be damaging to eyes and the skin around eyes," notes Brian S. Boxer Wachler, director of the Boxer Wachler Vision Institute in Beverly Hills, California. He adds that you can also use a generous drop of a good-quality artificial tear product in each eye before bedtime; this will help clean out any lingering particles. Make this step a part of your everyday routine, like washing your face or showering, and it will soon become a habit.

Prevent eye strain. Nail techs are constantly examining their work up close, and with the other elements in

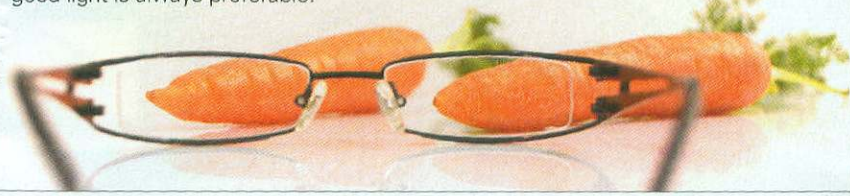
modern life—televisions, computers, cell phones—eyes can easily get strained. Anshel recommends the "3 B" approach: blink, breathe and break. "Use the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, take 20 seconds to look 20 feet away or close your eyes," he recommends. "We blink at a rate one-third of the normal rate when



Common Eye Myths Debunked

Eye care professionals set us straight on some of the most common eye-related myths.

- **CARROTS ARE GOOD FOR YOUR EYES. FALSE** "Carrots sound good on paper because they have beta carotene, which converts to vitamin A, and vitamin A is part of the retina," says Jeffrey Anshel, OD, president of the Ocular Nutrition Society in Encinitas, CA. "But this conversion is less effective as we age, and you'd have to eat an entire bushel to get enough vitamin A. Plus, Americans generally get enough vitamin A in their diet, so there's no reason for that beta carotene to convert."
- **USING READING GLASSES WEAKENS THE EYES. FALSE** "After 40-years-old, the ability of our eye to change focus decreases, but reading glasses are not going to make eyes more or less healthy," states Benjamin Ticho, MD, associate professor of ophthalmology at the University of Illinois Eye & Ear Infirmary in Chicago.
- **EXTENSIVE COMPUTER USE WEAKENS THE EYES. FALSE** "Computer use adds strain to the eyes, but it doesn't make eyes weaker," asserts Snigdha Singh, MD, associate at Castleman Eye Center in Troy, MI. "Eye strain is a short-term inconvenience that has not been found to lead to long-term damage."
- **READING IN LOW LIGHT HINDERS EYESIGHT. FALSE** "The myth about reading in poor light damaging your vision is not credible," says Anshel. However, reading in good light is always preferable.



Symptoms of eye strain may include blurred vision, night blindness, eye dryness, eye irritation, headaches, or aches in the back, shoulder or neck.

we look at a computer screen, and blinking keeps the eyes moist." Symptoms of eye strain may include blurred vision, night blindness, eye dryness, eye irritation, headaches, or aches in the back, shoulder or neck.

"Closing the eyes briefly throughout the day resets your focusing," agrees Benjamin Ticho, MD, associate professor of ophthalmology at the University of Illinois Eye & Ear Infirmary in Chicago. "You shouldn't read or look at a computer screen for an hour straight without rest." He notes that certain symptoms—persistent headaches or sudden blurred vision—warrant an eye exam with an

ophthalmologist, while other seemingly alarming signs (floaters, flashers or sparks in vision) are usually benign, but can indicate a tear or detachment in the retina. When in doubt, see a doctor.

Commit to regular checkups. Even if all seems well with your eyesight, you'll want to see an eye doctor on a regular basis to ensure that everything is working properly. "Regular eye checkups will help you catch problems before they start—generally every two years is recommended," says Boxer Wachler. "Those with diabetes, high blood pressure or other conditions should seek an eye exam yearly."

Maintain lubrication. Nail techs are often working around chemicals and dust from filing all day, so Singh recommends using lubricating eye drops four times daily, especially if eyes feel gritty, red or irritated. However, avoid products that are designed to counteract redness, like Visine or Clear Eyes. "Using these on a regular basis can actually create high blood pressure, and they don't actually solve the problem—they just camouflage redness," she explains. Plus, after continued use, these types of drops can create dependency, often causing the redness to come back worse than before. Instead, choose artificial tear-type products, available in many different forms, to help counteract the activities and environments— heating/air conditioning, computer use, wind, etc.—that lead to eye dryness, says Bonanni. ↓

Tracy Morin is a freelance writer and editor based in Oxford, MS.

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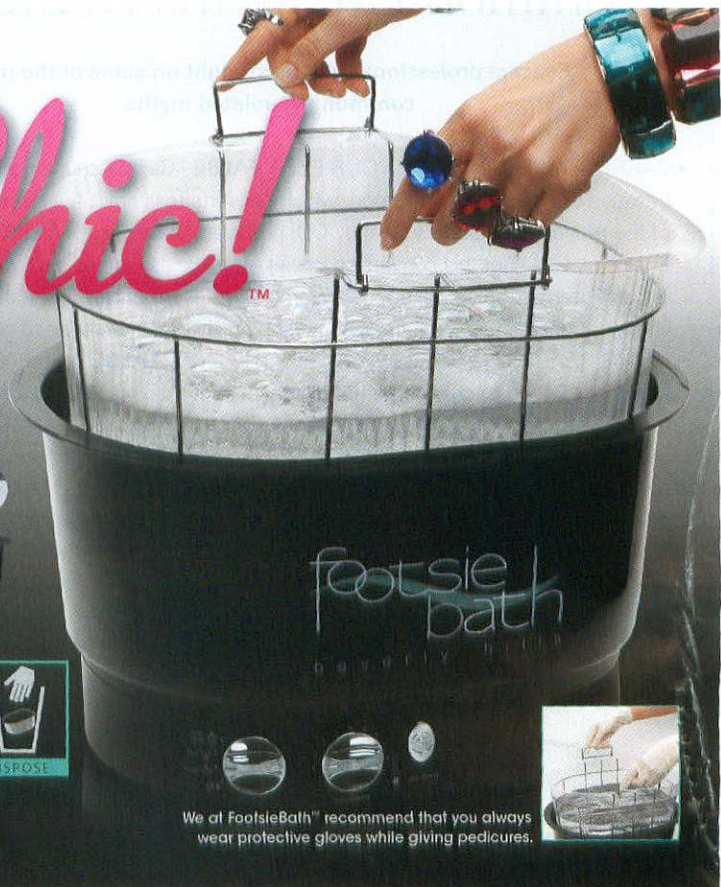
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