

Holiday Vision Tips

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We are all busy during the holiday season—too busy for an emergency visit for eye pain or broken glasses. Here are some tips for keeping your holidays happy.

Visiting family can mean unsafe situations for glasses and contacts. Babies grab glasses. Toddlers try on glasses and often pull them flat or twist them. Lenses can pop out. Contact lens packages can come open or slide down the drain. Dogs find glasses irresistible chew toys; cats love to bat them around. So plan ahead—bring spare glasses and contact lenses. These can make the difference between a great vacation and days spent scrambling around town with poor vision.

All eyes are vulnerable to dryness, especially during winter travel. Airplanes, hotel rooms, and cars with defrosters all have low humidity. Drinking caffeinated drinks or alcohol cause dehydration; drinking water rehydrates the body and the eyes. Small bottles of artificial tears ease eye irritation.

Contact lenses depend on moisture for greatest comfort. Consequently, if lenses are worn during a flight, eyes can be red and even lens intolerant upon reaching the destination. The best option is to wear glasses while on a plane—they act as a barrier to the overhead fan and as a moisture chamber around the eyes. Napping is also safer without contacts in. Airline security limits liquids so check with a carrier before departure.

Scratched eyes are very painful. Christmas tree branches, baby fingernails, gift wrapping can all make sharp scratches which heal poorly. Copious amounts of artificial tears often relieve pain from superficial wounds. Fluids splashed in the eye should be well-rinsed with water. Inability to open the eyes, light sensitivity, and nausea require a visit to the local eye doctor. Emergency rooms often do not have adequate equipment for examining the eye and waits are long. Do not wear contact lenses until the eye fully heals.

Unfamiliar perfumes, soaps, and air fresheners can cause allergic reactions. Over-the-counter allergy eye drops are available in most stores. Oral medications such as Zyrtec are helpful for body allergies but actually dry the eyes and give little itching relief. Cold compresses reduce swelling and itching of eye tissues.

Enjoy the holidays by being good to your body. Get plenty of rest, eat good food, wash your hands, and be prepared for small eye emergencies.