

1 LIFESTYLE CHOICES

It's the day-to-day health decisions that build the foundation for your overall wellbeing – and eye health is no different.

"A healthy lifestyle can help. A balanced diet, staying active, limiting alcohol and avoiding smoking all support eye health," says Giles.

2 PREVENTION OVER CURE

With any eye condition, regular check-ups are vital.

"For most people, prevention starts with early detection. At Specsavers, we recommend an eye check every two years, or more often if advised by your optometrist – and it's important to book one even if you haven't noticed any problems," reminds Giles.

3

RISK FACTORS

"Having diabetes, high or low blood pressure, a history of eye injury or surgery, long-term use of steroids, as well as high levels of short- or long-sightedness, can all increase your risk of developing glaucoma," says Giles.

You're also up to four times more likely to develop glaucoma if you have a close relative with the condition, so it's important to share this with your optometrist.



5

MANAGE SCREEN TIME

More eye problems are creeping in as the years pass, resulting from excessive use of digital devices.

Problems can include eye strain, blurred vision and dry eyes, and too much screen time can potentially contribute to the development or progression of myopia.

Remember the 20-20-20 rule.

Every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Try for full no-screen days, too.

4

BE SUN AWARE

"Protecting your eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses is another simple way to reduce the risk of long-term damage from conditions such as cataracts or macular degeneration," says Giles.

Overexposure to harmful UV rays can lead to photokeratitis – a type of sunburn to the outer layer of the cornea. Category 4 sunglasses let in just 8% of light, making them ideal for extremely bright conditions.

'I COULDN'T BELIEVE I HAD GLAUCOMA IN MY FORTIES'



Rachel Parkinson, a 49-year-old mum from Preston, who is short-sighted and has astigmatism, was left shocked after a routine eye check-up in 2020

"As part of my routine eye check at my local Specsavers, I decided to have the OCT (optical coherence tomography) scan. It helps detect potential eye health issues such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration, at a very reasonable cost.

"The results of the scan showed something wasn't right and the optician could see abnormalities at the back of my eye. They suspected I had glaucoma and referred me to my GP for further investigation.

"This was the first I had really heard of the condition – I thought it

was something that only affected older adults. I couldn't believe it – I hadn't had any symptoms at all.

"By the time the diagnosis was confirmed at an ophthalmology clinic, I had already lost some sight in my right eye so my glaucoma was considered advanced. This loss of sight is subtle and takes place over a long period of time. Luckily, my left eye is not as advanced and I still have most of my visual field in that eye.

"Following my diagnosis I tried multiple types of eye drops to reduce the pressure in my eyes and

prevent further vision loss, which weren't effective for me. I then had laser therapy, twice, but that didn't work either. My consultant at the Lancashire Eye Clinic then carried out a trabeculectomy on each eye – this is a surgical procedure performed to reduce eye pressures.

"I still have bouts of anxiety prior to any kind of check-up or eye test. I tell everyone about glaucoma and how it can develop at any age. In the early stages there are no symptoms, but if it is detected and treated you have a good chance of preventing further sight loss."