Eye Health Tips for 2016

Happy New Year! As we start another “trip around the sun”, we offer our readers some basic suggestions to keep your eyes happy and healthy.

Speaking of the sun, most people know that it’s important to protect your skin from the harmful rays of the sun, but many are not aware of the damage that sunlight can do to the eyes. According to the National Eye Institute, UV rays from the sun can cause cataracts, macular degeneration, and pterygium, a condition in which tissue grows over the white part of the eye, causing astigmatism. When shopping for sunglasses, it is crucial that you purchase those that protect from 99% of both UVA and UVB radiation.

Many eye diseases, including glaucoma, have no early warning signs, but can be detected through a comprehensive eye exam which includes pupil dilation. Additionally, many systemic diseases, including high blood pressure and diabetes, can be detected at their earliest stages through pupil dilation. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that adults with no symptoms or known risk factors get a baseline comprehensive eye exam, including dilation, no later than age 40, and then have periodic exams that should become more frequent as they age; adults over age 65 should have an eye exam every 1-2 years.

In addition to regular eye exams, BostonSight PROSE® patients are strongly encouraged to see their PROSE provider annually for a PROSE exam. During this visit, your doctor will exam the patients’ PROSE devices, make any adjustments that are needed, and address any related issues. Please note that this annual visit does NOT serve as a substitute for regular visits to your primary eye care provider; you must continue to see her/him as recommended. To schedule a PROSE checkup, please contact your PROSE provider.

Best wishes,

The PROSE Eye View Editorial Team
Susan Parnell- a patient’s story

Blindsided.

This is how Susan Parnell felt when she was told that all medical options had been exhausted, and that she would simply have to learn to live with the extreme eye pain and light sensitivity caused by Sjogren’s syndrome, an autoimmune disease that primarily presents with symptoms of dry eyes and a dry mouth. “I couldn’t believe that,” said Susan. “With all of the technology available, it seemed crazy that I would just have to live like this.”

Dry eye began affecting Susan’s life in her mid-50’s. “My eyes were dry and sore all the time, and very sensitive to sunlight, and it just kept getting worse. It felt like my eyes had a headache all the time.”

Two years later, when she arrived in Needham for BostonSight® PROSE treatment, Susan’s eye condition had worsened to the point that she couldn’t tolerate bright light, and was unable use the computer, read, or drive a car.

A busy professional who juggles several business ventures, and also volunteers with her certified therapy dog in her local school system, Susan was thrilled when she learned that PROSE might be the answer she was looking for. “I had spent a ton of money on eye drops, expensive sunglasses, and many different doctors. When I heard about PROSE, I would have gone anywhere to try it. Lucky me, it was practically in my own backyard,” said the coastal Massachusetts resident.

“PROSE treatment was a miracle for me. Everyone at BostonSight was pleasant, patient, and soothing,” remembers Susan. She had particularly effusive praise for Kevin Renaud, the ophthalmic technician who trained her in the application, removal, and care of her new prosthetic devices. “Kevin was just SO encouraging. He uses PROSE devices himself, and I couldn’t even see them in his eyes!” Susan particularly enjoyed the community kitchen, where she met patients who had traveled there from around the world. “It was beautiful to be able to experience all of those people able to see again.”

Now able to resume her active life, Susan has some advice for anyone going through their own personal healthy journey. “Many people don’t have the time or perseverance to keep researching and looking for a solution. But you have to be your own best advocate. When you have a health problem, don’t give up! There is always a solution.”
PROSE treatment impact at five years

Data based on a study that was conducted to determine the lasting impact of BostonSight® PROSE treatment was recently published in the British Journal of Ophthalmology. The study, a retrospective review of clinical, manufacturing, and quality databases at Boston Foundation for Sight, reviewed all 121 patients who completed PROSE treatment at BFS during a six month period in 2008, and concluded that almost 75% of those patients continued to wear and receive benefit from their PROSE devices five years post-treatment.

Recent presentations by Dr. Jacobs

BFS Medical Director Deborah S. Jacobs, MD, traveled to Chicago in October, where she was a guest speaker at the Chicago Chronic GVHD Meeting, presented by Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary (IEEI) and the University of Illinois College of Medicine. During the Chronic Ocular GVHD session, which was co-moderated by BostonSight PROSE Clinical Fellow Ellen Shorter, OD, FAAO, Dr. Jacobs spoke about Prosthetic Devices in oGVHD Management.

In December, Dr. Jacobs was in Toronto to attend the Walter Wright Symposium at the University of Toronto. This year’s program focused on all aspects of corneal disease diagnosis and management. During the two-day continuing education event, Dr. Jacobs gave a talk during the Keratoconus and Ectasia session entitled Contact Lenses for Corneal Ectasia: Where are we Now and What Does the Future Hold?
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Need help paying for medications?

When money is tight, people often have to make difficult decisions. “Do I pay the electric bill, or pick up my prescriptions?” Fortunately, there are a few resources available to help those in need pay for prescription drugs.

Many pharmaceutical companies have programs, called Patient Assistance Programs (PAPs), to help with the high cost of certain medications. RxAssist is a website that offers a comprehensive database of PAPs. Simply visit their website and enter the name of your medication to learn about programs that may be available.

Since the passage of the Affordable HealthCare Act, many more people in the United States are covered by health insurance; but even with a good plan, premiums, copayments, and deductibles can really add up. The HealthWell Foundation was established to help low income individuals, living with chronic illnesses, to pay these expenses. In addition to assisting individuals with certain diseases, they also have a Pediatric Assistance Fund to help children with chronic or life threatening conditions, regardless of disease type.

BMT symposium in Chicago this spring

Celebrating a Second Chance at Life, a national symposium for bone marrow, stem cell, and cord blood transplant survivors, will be held April 30 – May 1 in Chicago. The symposium, which occurs approximately every 18 months, is hosted by BMT InfoNet, the Blood and Marrow Transplant Information Network. It includes programming for transplant survivors and their family members, as well as for health care professionals.

Ellen Shorter, OD, FAAO (pictured at left), who is the BostonSight® PROSE Clinical Fellow at Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary, will give a talk entitled Chronic Graft-versus-Host Disease of the Eyes: From Ocular Oasis to Parched Desert; we will also have a table in the exhibit hall for the duration of the symposium with information about BostonSight PROSE treatment. If you are going to be there, please stop by and say hello!
BOSTONSIGHT NETWORK

Updates to San Francisco and Long Island PROSE providers

We are pleased to tell you that BostonSight® PROSE treatment is once again available in San Francisco! The clinic is located at University of California, San Francisco, and is under the direction of BostonSight PROSE Clinical Fellow Karen Lee, OD, FAAO, FSLS (pictured at left). They are currently scheduling appointments for new and returning PROSE patients.

On the other side of the country, North Shore – LIJ Health System announced that, as of January 1, they will be known as Northwell Health. The talented doctors and staff at the PROSE clinic, located at the Northwell Health Ocular Surface Center, will still be there to welcome existing and new patients.

Cancer survivor finds relief with PROSE

USC Eye Institute, home to the BostonSight PROSE clinic in Southern California, recently shared the touching story of Nicole, a cancer survivor who, through BostonSight PROSE treatment, found relief from the severe dry eye caused by ocular graft versus host disease. She had lost all hope, but now looks forward to living a normal life.