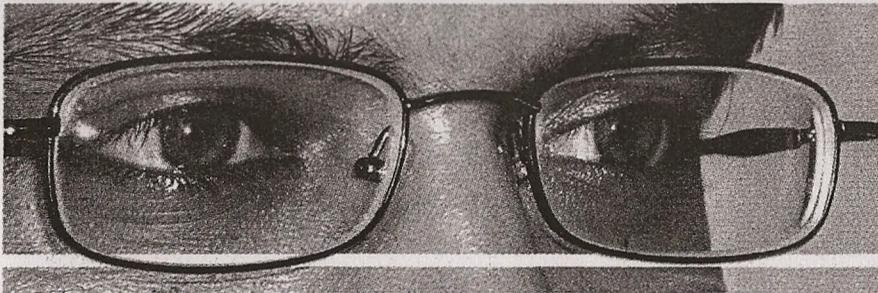


Watching too much TV does not lead to short-sightedness! Read on to dispel more such myths



Eyeing trouble

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WITH a little knowledge of the human body one almost claims to be a doctor in his own right. Little wonder then, that one receives all sorts of absurd and innocuous advice. Eye care is no different. Let's bust some common misconceptions and myths about how one can adversely affect or impair his vision.

Myth
Reading in dim light is harmful for the eyes.

Fact
Although reading in dim light can make your eyes feel tired, it is not harmful.

Myth
Working on the computer for long hours is harmful for the eyes

Fact
Although using a computer monitor is associated with eye strain or fatigue, it is not harmful to the eyes.

Myth
Watching TV for long hours will result in short sight.

Fact
Watching TV may tire the eyes, but will not result in short sight.

Myth
Ill-fitting glasses damage your eyes.

Fact
Although good fitting glasses are required for good vision, ill-fitting glasses do not damage the eyes.

Myth
Reading in a moving bus increases the power of your lens.

Fact
Reading in a moving bus though not advisable only contributes to eye strain and fatigue.

Myth
Wearing ill-fitting contacts does not harm your eyes.

Fact
Ill-fitting contact lenses can be harmful to your cornea. Get your eyes checked regularly by your ophthalmologist if you wear contact lenses.

Myth
Eye exercises and eating lots of carrots can reduce the power.

Fact
Although eating a nutritious diet including fresh fruits and vegetables is good for the eye tissues, it cannot reduce the power. Short sight is usually due to increase in the length of the eyeball and this cannot be reduced by exercises or diet.

Myth
You do not need to have your eyes checked until you are in your 40's or 50's.

Fact
There are several asymptomatic, yet treatable, eye diseases (most notably glaucoma) that can begin prior to reaching your 40's. Periodic eye check ups once in at least two years is advisable for everyone.

Myth
It is okay to sleep or swim with soft contact lenses.

Fact
Potentially blinding eye infections can result from using contact lenses while swimming or wearing them while sleeping.

Myth
Being squint is a temporary phase in childhood.

Fact
A child whose eyes are misaligned has *strabismus* (squint) and can develop poor vision in one eye (a condition known as amblyopia) because the brain turns off the misaligned or 'lazy' eye. The sooner crossed or misaligned eyes are treated, the less likely the child will have permanently impaired vision.

Myth
A cataract must be ripe before it can be removed.

Fact
With modern techniques, a cataract does not have to ripen before it is removed. When a cataract keeps you from doing the things you need to do, consider having it removed.

Myth
Cataracts can be removed with lasers without any incision or surgery.

Fact
Cataract cannot be removed with a laser. The cloudy lens must be removed through a surgical incision. However, after the cataract surgery, a membrane within the eye may become cloudy. This membrane can be treated with laser surgery.

Myth
Eyes can be transplanted.

Fact
The eye cannot be transplanted. It is connected to the brain by the optic nerve, which cannot be reconnected once it has been severed. Cornea—the clear front part of the eye—can be transplanted. Surgeons often use plastic intraocular lens implants (IOLs) to replace natural lenses removed during cataract surgery.

Myth
A diabetic need not have his eyes examined if his vision is good.

Fact
Diabetic retinopathy can progress to an advanced stage without affecting the central vision. Early recognition can stop the progression and prevent permanent blindness.

Myth
If my blood sugar is under control, I will not develop diabetic retinopathy.

Fact
Diabetic retinopathy is related to the duration of diabetes and not the blood sugar levels.

Myth
Laser treatment will reverse the damage already done.

Fact
Laser treatment can only prevent further progression. It cannot reverse damage already done to the retina. ■

The author is a consultant in paediatric ophthalmology

Boost your libido

Feel good about yourself. Nothing reduces your interest in sex more than low self-esteem. Pamper yourself when you're feeling down and take some time to relax or indulge in an activity that makes you feel better.

Ginkgo biloba. This herbal remedy made from the leaves of the *ginkgo biloba* tree, improves blood flow to the brain and the sexual organ. It is believed to have an enhancing effect upon desire, excitement and orgasm.

Massage. Massages can do wonders for sexual arousal particularly if you're stressed, worried or angry. Arrange for soft lighting in the room with soothing music. Start massaging your partner's back.

Eat the right things. If your body becomes frail due to bad health sex invariably suffers. Fruits and vegetables ensure good health. The vitamins and antioxidants will help maintain good blood flow to the sex organs and prevent certain chronic diseases.

Lose weight. Being overweight can affect not only

your self-esteem and your feelings of sexuality but you're likely to suffer from blood vessel disease which can reduce blood flow to the genitals.

Keep fit. Moderate regular exercising will help improve blood flow to the sex organs. In addition, exercise helps you feel good about yourself. Anything that improves self-esteem will improve libido.

Stop smoking. Smoking can have a terrible affect on blood flow as it causes the blood vessels to constrict. It also saps your stamina.

Aphrodisiacs. There is no magic love potion but aphrodisiacs can be fun. Often they are food that look sexually suggestive like asparagus. Others, like oysters, gain their love-inducing reputation by containing antioxidants and trace elements necessary for good sexual functioning. For example, oysters are packed with zinc, a mineral central to

fertility.

Drink in moderation. One alcoholic beverage can lubricate a nervous first-date situation. By reducing anxiety and stress one drink can help get you in the mood for sex. But beware, alcohol is a depressant, too much booze and you can end up with quite the opposite problem. ■

