

## Eyeglasses and Sunglasses: Tips for Selecting, Wearing and Keeping Them On!

The very best pair of prescription eyeglasses is only helpful when worn consistently and when needed. Likewise for sunglasses, that can be purchased with or without a prescription. Here are some suggestions to encourage consistent and safe use of eyeglasses and/or sunglasses.

### **Ask the Eye Doctor when eyeglasses or sunglasses are to be worn.**

It is **very important** that you know and document when a person's eyeglasses are to be worn so that you can appropriately encourage their use:

**Near Vision:** An eyeglass prescription for near should be worn only when a person is seated and reading or looking at items that are within 16 inches from their eyes. When a person is wearing a near vision prescription and is looking beyond the focal distance that the eyeglasses were prescribed for, images will appear blurred. **Near or "reading glasses", which they are sometimes called, should never be worn when walking.**

**Distance Vision:** An eyeglass prescription for distance should be worn when a person is walking, traveling, watching TV, etc. It may also be appropriate for distance vision spectacles to be worn during all awake hours. Please be sure to check with the eye doctor who prescribed the glasses.

**Near and Distance Vision - Bifocals:** An eyeglass prescription which has correction for both near and far distances can be worn all the time. If bifocals are prescribed, a conversation should occur with the eye doctor as bifocals can be difficult to adjust to and are also associated with increased fall risk if not used correctly. An alternative to having one pair of bifocals is to obtain two pairs of glasses one for each specific use (one for near vision and a separate pair for distance vision).

## Eyeglasses and Sunglasses (continued)

### When eyeglasses or sunglasses are to be worn (continued)

**Eye Protection:** Individuals who have only one functioning eye, who have eye turn(s), or who have no depth perception should wear eyeglasses for eye protection. Even if the person does not have a refractive error and does not need to wear eyeglasses to sharpen their vision, they still should be prescribed clear polycarbonate lens for protection only. Please be sure to discuss this need with the eye doctor.

**Sun Protection and Sunglasses:** Sunglasses can be made with a person's eyeglass prescription – either as stand alone glasses, or with transition lenses that turn into sunglasses when in bright sunlight. Non-prescription fit-over sunglasses or clip-on's can also be worn over a person's standard eyeglasses.

To consider:

- If the individual has an existing eyeglass prescription, be sure to talk to the eye doctor about the best sun lens plan for them.
- If the individual does not have an eyeglass prescription, off the shelf sunglasses can be purchased. Check to be sure that sunglasses offer UVA and UVB protection. Polarized sun lenses that reduce glare are also available, but these are often more expensive.

### Create a System for Keeping Track of Multiple Pairs of Eyeglasses.

Some people may have more than one eyeglass prescription and it will be very important that you have a system for remembering which pair is for which use. The system can be as simple as noting the color or style of each frame to identify different uses or using colored cords or bands that attach to the frame to do the same.

Just as important as the system you've created is to write it down (for remembering which pairs are for which use) and be sure that everyone involved understands and uses the system consistently.

### Think “Fashionable Durability” When Selecting a Frame.

Always strive to select the best fitting and best-looking frame(s) possible for an individual. Comfortable, fashionable frames are most likely to be worn.

## Eyeglasses and Sunglasses (continued)

### **It's all in the Fit.**

Be sure that the optician orders longer or shorter temples (arms of the eyeglasses) if needed to comfortably fit the area from the frame to behind the person's ear.

In addition, be sure that larger or smaller sized frames (with or without nose pads) are ordered to adequately and comfortably fit the individual's face and the bridge of their nose.

### **A well-made, durable frame may be in order.**

Autoflex frames have been very successful with individuals who tend to be hard on their frames. Autoflex frames can take a lot of bending without breaking. Please discuss this option, including cost with the Optician.

Consider however, for individuals who may engage in self abusive behavior and may strike their face, the Autoflex frames are not a good choice as they are made of metal and with enough force, may lacerate the eyebrow of the individual. In these cases, a durable plastic frame or a sports frame works best. Always discuss with the Optician any safety concerns that you have on the individual's behalf.

### **One Pair or Two?**

It may be prudent to purchase two pairs of eyeglasses with the same prescription – especially if the person is prone to breaking or temporarily misplacing their eyeglasses. Even in the best possible situations, with an Optician right around the corner to repair any broken frames, there generally is some wait to get the eyeglasses back from being repaired. Having a second pair of eyeglasses can be extremely helpful in these situations, particularly if eyeglass tolerance has been difficult for the person.

### **Beyond the Frame: Cords, Bands, Cases & Other Accessories**

Eyeglass accessories offer much more than just a fashion statement. In fact, some of these items can be very helpful to keep eyeglasses comfortably on or safe when they are not being worn.

## Eyeglasses and Sunglasses (continued)

### **Beyond the Frame (continued)**

**Cords** can be attached to eyeglass temples and hung around a person's neck so that if eyeglasses slip or are not needed at the moment – they are always just a reach away.

**Bands** can also be attached to eyeglass temples to help keep eyeglasses snug on someone's face. Bands can be particularly helpful for those individuals whose eyeglasses tend to always slip down their nose.

**Hard Cases** are fabulous for prevention of scratches on the lenses as well as for prevention of crushing of eyeglasses when they are not being worn.

### **Make a New Friend... Meet with your Optician and Return for Regular Adjustments!**

Eyeglasses can easily bend out of shape and not fit well – causing pressure points and potential skin break down at the bridge of the nose, behind the ears, etc. In addition, eyeglasses that are not fitting properly can slip down one's nose, break, etc. Other eyeglass mishaps include losing screws, scratched lenses, etc. To keep eyeglasses maintained, please have them adjusted regularly.

### **Eyeglass Toleration - Help for Keeping Eyeglasses On**

Some individuals have difficulty tolerating their prescription eyeglasses and may only wear them for a few seconds to a few minutes before taking them off. To encourage someone to wear their eyeglasses, especially for those individuals who have a significant correction, a tolerance program may be in order.

It's important to keep in mind that the best option for eyeglass tolerance really can only be selected by the TEAM of people working with the individual and who knows them the best.

Eyeglass tolerance programs can be very successful – but sometimes they do not work quite so well. Please, don't lose hope. With some folks, over time, and with consistent encouragement, they do accept the wearing of their eyeglasses.

# Eyeglasses and Sunglasses (continued)

## Steps to consider when a person is not tolerating their eyeglasses:

1. Bring the eyeglasses and a copy of the eyeglass prescription to the Optician and ask for the eyeglasses to be checked to be sure that the lenses contain the currently prescribed prescription.
2. When visiting the Optician, make sure that the frame is fitting as comfortably as possible and is adjusted correctly.
3. Make sure that everyone involved knows exactly when the eyeglasses are to be worn, and if they were prescribed for a specific activity such as dining, reading, watching TV, walking, etc.
4. Make sure that before the eyeglasses are put on, that they are clean. Talk with your Optician about care and cleaning of eyeglasses, but in general, use of a diluted mild cleaning soap, water and a soft, lint free cloth should work.
5. Make sure that as the person is wearing them, that the eyeglasses remain clean. Periodic cleaning throughout the day may be needed, especially if the person touches their eyeglasses frequently.
6. Use of band to keep the eyeglasses on and snug to the person's head may be helpful. Consult with the Optician for options.

## Tolerance Suggestions

Be sure to discuss options with the eye doctor and optician.

### Option 1:

Pair the full eyeglass prescription with a favorite and motivating activity that matches what the eyeglasses were prescribed for, and, preferably an activity where the person's hands can be busy. Establish baseline of how long the person tolerates wearing the eyeglasses before removing them. After establishing baseline, ask the person to wear the eyeglasses for a shorter period of time than they originally tolerated the glasses and then remove them (yourself) at the end of the session. Through a series of sessions, increase the amount of time that you ask the person to wear their eyeglasses.

### Option 2:

If the eyeglass prescription is very strong, talk to the eye doctor and ask if a ½ strength prescription could be written for the individual and then work with them as described above. In this way, you can help to ease them into the full strength of the prescription over time.

# Eyeglasses and Sunglasses (continued)

## Tolerance Suggestions (continued)

### Option 3:

Help the person to get used to wearing an eyeglass frame only - with no correction, with a plain or plano lens. Again, ask the person to wear the frames for a shorter period of time than they originally tolerated them and then remove them (yourself) at the end of the session. Through a series of sessions, increase the amount of time that you ask the person to wear the frames, before you remove them. Once they are able to tolerate the frames for a longer period of time – even for up to 15-30 minutes, present them with the frame with the eyeglass prescription and repeat again as described.



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### See also MCB/DDS Partnership handouts:

- Making the Most of an Eye Exam
- Eye Surgery
- Sensitivity to Vision Loss: How to Best Assist a Person Who Has Vision Loss
- Creating a Safe Environment

**For additional resources, please visit:** [focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)