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How to care for your eyes

October 28, 2010

by Tan Lili



Image: Corbis

The mad wealth of eye makeup products, fancy contact lenses, cool sunglasses and designer frames all imply one common goal; we want to make our eyes attractive.

But did you know women are more prone to eye problems as a result of some of those look-good products?

While eye diseases are not really gender specific, Dr Lee Sao Bing, medical director of Shinagawa LASIK Centre, explained that the many stages of a woman's life can have an impact on her vision due to lifestyle habits and hormonal changes.

"Women in general are prone to getting eye allergies, irritations and infections such as conjunctivitis (red eye) because of the use of cosmetics," said Dr Lee. "When eye makeup gets into the eye and floats in the tear duct, it can be a source of infection."

Changes in the hormonal levels in a woman's body — usually from birth control pills, pregnancy and menopause — can also cause temporary eye problems, such as dry and inflamed eyes and corneal swelling.

"It's best to have your eyes checked during pregnancy if you experience blurry vision, increased eye pressure or sensitivity to light, as they may indicate high blood pressure or gestational diabetes," Dr Lee stressed.

Besides lifestyle habits and hormonal changes, a longer life span than men also puts women at a higher risk for age-related eye diseases, including cataracts, glaucoma and dry eye syndrome.

We may not be able to prevent ageing and hormonal changes, but we can look after our eyes without compromising on beauty. Dr Lee told us more.

Some tips on how women can care for their eyes.

Dr Lee: "While most women are conscious of the need to protect their skin from the sun, many don't realise that prolonged exposure to sunlight and its UV rays can also increase the risk of cataracts and other eye diseases. So do not overlook the importance of wearing sunglasses when you are out in the sun, and always choose a pair that blocks out both UVA and UVB rays.

Always remove your makeup and wash your face before going to bed, as there are ingredients in eye makeup that may irritate the eyes when used for a prolonged period. This practice will also keep the skin around your eyes healthy.

Do remember to follow the proper instruction of contact lens use — misappropriate length of wear and cleaning of lenses can lead to a variety of eye infections, including some that might even cause blindness. Always remember to wash your hands before handling lenses and use the recommended contact lens solution to clean them."

Can eye makeup actually harm our eyes?

Dr Lee: "Eye makeup is usually of no harm to the eyes as long as it is used properly and is not contaminated or expired. It is recommended that you replace your makeup every six months, and if you suffer from an eye infection you should discard all eye makeup. You should also cultivate the good habit of cleaning your cosmetic tools more often to prevent build-up of bacteria, which can lead to eye infections and allergies.

Applying eyeliner at the rim of the eye can sometimes pose a problem — you should avoid applying eyeliner along the

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rims near the tear duct and oil gland areas where possible, because it can block the tear ducts and cause dry eye and infection, which lead to sties that can also be caused by leaving eye makeup on overnight.

For contact lens wearers, it is recommended that you put in your contact lenses first, before applying makeup to avoid getting makeup residue inside the eye, which in turn causes eye infections."

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LASIK SURGERY

According to Dr Lee, advanced technologies and affordable options have made LASIK surgery safer and more accessible. But before you make an appointment with your eye doctor, read these important notes.

- You won't experience pain during the surgery, even though it is performed while you are fully conscious. A mild sedative is given to ensure you remain comfortable, and a topical anesthetic (eye drop) helps to numb the eye. All you will experience is a sensation of pressure just before your vision fades for a few seconds.
- You must be over 21 years old and have had a stable glasses or contact lens prescription for at least one year to be eligible for LASIK surgery.
- There is no maximal age limit for LASIK surgery.
- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, avoid LASIK surgery because of the hormonal changes in your body, which can lead to inaccuracy during the procedure.

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