

the eyes

YOUR EYES ARE A WINDOW INTO YOUR SOUL AND OVERALL HEALTH. WE TAKE AN INSIDE LOOK AT HOW THEY WORK. BY KATE DALEY

THE AVERAGE PERSON BLINKS **10,800** TIMES PER DAY.

Red-eye in photos is caused by the flash illuminating the blood vessels of your retina.

Every **12** minutes, a Canadian begins to experience vision loss.

Eyesight dos and don'ts:

DO: Wear sunglasses year-round. Exposure to ultraviolet rays can lead to cataracts (a progressive condition that results in hazy, discoloured vision) and age-related macular degeneration, a disease which leads to a breakdown of tissue in the centre of the retina. Look for glasses that offer 100-percent UVA and UVB protection, and opt for polarized lenses to reduce glare from snow and water.

DON'T: Use anti-redness drops. The more often you use them, the less effective they become, due to a process called rebound vasodilation. Stick with artificial tears instead of medicated drops.

Three things you didn't know about your eyes:

1 **The eye works like a camera.** Light enters the eye through a clear outer dome known as the cornea. The iris, the coloured portion that surrounds the pupil, expands and contracts to let light in. Just behind the pupil is the lens, which focuses light rays on the retina. Like film inside a camera, the retina captures images, sending them via the optic nerve to the brain.

2 **Everyone will experience some level of vision loss.** Presbyopia, or reading vision loss, occurs in one's 40s or 50s, says Dr. Jeffrey J. Machat, MD, a Toronto-based ophthalmologist. If close-up objects begin to appear blurry and you have to hold them farther away to focus, consult a specialist about reading glasses.

3 **Looking at a screen for extended periods doesn't damage your eyes.** You're more likely to experience dry eyes if you spend a lot of time on your computer, but this is a matter of fatigue, not permanent damage, says Dr. Machat. "You're not blinking as often, so your eyes get more tired more quickly and things get blurry."