DISCOVERY
THE DISCOVERY EYE FOUNDATION

Winter 2015

The Discovery Eye Foundation supports research, education and advocacy related to sight-threatening eye diseases and their treatments, improving the quality of life for patients and their families.

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The Aging Eye

If you are a senior having trouble reading menus and newspapers, difficulty driving, or problems seeing labels and signs, you are not alone. Our eyes age as we do, and many people begin to deal with serious age-related eye conditions, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), cataracts and glaucoma.

AMD

AMD is the No. 1 cause of severe vision loss in seniors in the United States, affecting 15 million adults. It is a progressive eye condition, in which the macula of the eye, where our sharpest central vision occurs, deteriorates. This is the vision we use to drive, read, recognize faces and perform daily tasks. AMD does not cause complete blindness; it leaves peripheral vision, with dim images or black holes at the center of vision.

There are two types of AMD: "wet" (neovascular) and "dry" (atrophic). While there is no cure for AMD, treatments are available for the wet form of the disease. Research is under way to find treatments for the dry form.

"AMD can have a tremendous impact on the ability to perform daily tasks we often take for granted," says Judi Delgado, director of the Macular Degeneration Partnership (MDP), an educational program of the Discovery Eye Foundation (DEF). "However, rehabilitation training and assistive devices can help people use their remaining vision more effectively and maintain their independence."

- *Visit the MDP website for information on AMD and resources for living with the disease.*
- *Visit the DEF blog for posts about AMD.*

Cataracts

Behind the iris and pupil, the natural crystalline lens of the eye is responsible for our ability to focus. As we age, the lens may become unclear, or "cloudy," affecting our ability to see clearly; this is called a cataract.

"Seeing with cataracts is like trying to see through a dusty car windshield when the sun is shining on it," says Dr. Anthony Nesburn, medical director of DEF (*read about his own experience with cataracts below*).

While symptoms may be improved with glasses, bright lighting and magnifiers, the only treatment for cataracts is surgery, which removes the cloudy lens and replaces it with an artificial intraocular lens. Fortunately, cataract surgery is extremely safe and effective, usually restoring sight and the ability to resume activities such as driving and reading.

- *Visit DEF's cataracts webpage, which includes video simulations.*
- *Visit our recent blog post about cataract surgery.*

Glaucoma

Glaucoma damages the optic nerve, the part of the central nervous system that carries visual information from the eye to the brain. In most cases, the eye experiences an increase of intraocular pressure (IOP) due to a buildup of fluid. Over time, elevated IOP can cause vision loss and irreversible blindness.

People with glaucoma are often unaware they have the disease, because there are no real symptoms. The disease is usually found during a dilated eye exam, which should be done every one to two years after the age of 40.

If not controlled, glaucoma can cause permanent debilitating vision loss. However, with early diagnosis, there are treatments that can protect against damage to the optic nerve and loss of vision. Glaucoma can be treated successfully with medication, lasers and surgical procedures.

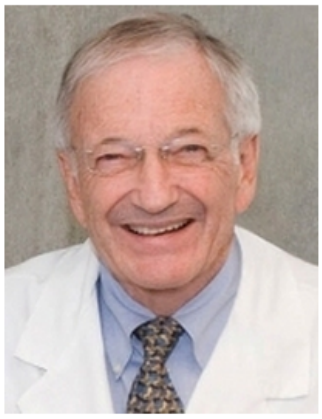
- *Visit DEF's glaucoma webpage.*
- *Visit the DEF blog for posts about glaucoma.*

Additional information on the aging eye: Aging and Your Eyes.

PROFILE

Surgery for the Surgeon

Dr. Anthony Nesburn's own experience with cataracts



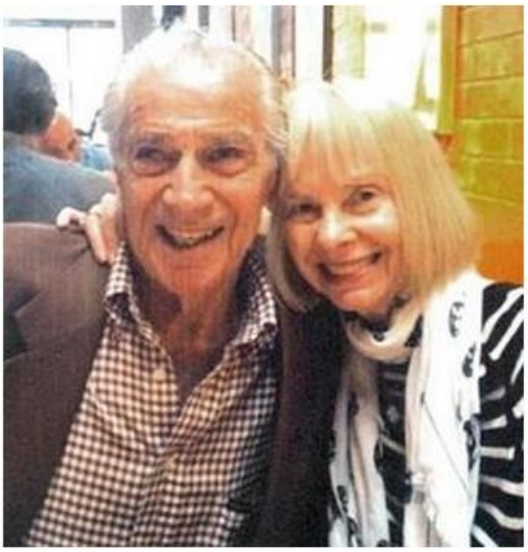
When it came time for cataract surgery on his own eyes, DEF Medical Director Dr. Anthony Nesburn wanted to be asleep. "I didn't want to hear what they were saying; I didn't want to know if anything was going wrong. I told them, 'Put me out, and wake me when it's over!'" he recalls with a characteristic laugh. The anesthesiologist worked hard to convince him full anesthesia was unnecessary. Ultimately, the "twilight sleep" they induced was sufficient, as Nesburn has no recollection of the actual procedure on either of his eyes. "It was pain-free, and I was already seeing well in the recovery room," he says.

Nesburn had always been near-sighted; he needed his bifocals to see in the distance and read as he went about his day. After the surgery, he could drive, read reasonably sized print and work at his computer — all without glasses. It was a vast improvement: Before the surgery, he was struggling to read small print and having real difficulty driving at night.

Still, Nesburn had put the surgery off. "I performed cataract surgery for more than 35 years, so I know everything that can possibly go wrong," he says. "For 98 percent of people, there is no problem, but I worried I'd be in the 2 percent! If a complication was going to happen, I figured it would happen to me!" Surgery for the Surgeon cont'd...

PROFILE

Circular Thinking



When DEF donor Bill Earn goes out to dinner, he likes a circular booth. It lets him sit closer to his "sweetheart," otherwise known as his fiancé, Elsie. They like to sit so close, in fact, that the waitstaff at one of the restaurants they frequent refers to them as "the love couple."

Talking with the funny and charming 89-year-old Earn makes it hard to believe him when he says: "Not long ago, I wanted to go to sleep and not wake up. I'd lost my Louise." Earn's wife of 44 years died of cancer in 2013. Louise had been the love of his life and his constant companion.

"I'll quit," he told Louise.

"I'll drive you," Louise told him.

Circular Thinking cont'd...

EVERYDAY SOLUTIONS

Tips for dealing with vision loss

A Little Assistance, Please

There are many assistive devices, tricks and tips that can make vision loss much more bearable. On our blog, we regularly spotlight helpful technology, as well as ways to adjust how you do things, that can help you maintain your independence and keep participating in activities you enjoy. Here are some highlights (do your own search on the blog for even more resources and tips):

- E-Readers for Low Vision
- Low-Vision Magnifiers
- Better Lighting for Better Vision
- 20 Tips for Cooking with Low Vision
- Spotlight Text — A New Way to Read

NUTRITION

Nutrition and Aging

As we get older, we need to meet similar nutrient requirements as when we were younger, but do it while consuming fewer calories. Sound fun? Well, your life depends on it. It's not as hard as it may seem to eat a healthy diet that provides the necessary nutrients and variables for good digestion and absorption of nutrients. A nutrient-dense (meaning foods high in nutrients in relation to their calories), fiber-filled, colorful and varied diet is key.

What do you need to eat in order to stay healthy, from your heart to your skin to your brain to your eyes? We recently published an information-packed post on our blog, called "The Best Nutrition for Older Adults." It includes a comprehensive list of what you need and where to find it, from **Omega-3 fats** (primarily found in fish, as well as soybeans, walnuts, flaxseed, chia, hemp and sesame seeds, and cauliflower) to **Zinc**, **vitamin C**, **vitamin E**, and the phytochemicals **lutein**, **zeaxanthin** and **beta-carotene** (found in kale, spinach, broccoli, peas, oranges and cantaloupes) — all of which can help prevent or stop the progression of age-related macular degeneration.

What is Quinoa Anyway? And a Recipe

Quinoa is a protein-packed, grain-like seed, which is full of antioxidants and other minerals that boost your immune system and contribute to eye health. Quinoa is a great replacement for white refined carbohydrates and sugary foods. Eye Cook's latest recipe, "Easy to Adapt Vegetable Soup with Quinoa" is not only easy, but it is packed with lots of vegetables and protein, and filled with eye-healthy vitamins and fiber. Perfect for a cold (or even cool) winter's day.

GIFTS

Free Money

There are ways you can give money to support DEF's sight-saving research and educational outreach without it costing you a cent. Sound too good to be true? It's not.

Smile on Amazon

If you shop on Amazon, just access the site through smile.amazon.com instead of plain old amazon.com, and 0.5% of your eligible purchases will go directly to DEF. Really, it's that easy:

- Go to smile.amazon.com.
- Log in as you would for your regular Amazon account.
- Select DEF as your charity of choice, and it will remember it every time you visit.
- Be sure to bookmark smile.amazon.com to ensure all your purchases will send money to DEF.

Give an Old Vehicle

Donate your car, boat, truck, RV, Jet Ski or snowmobile to DEF, and you'll receive a tax deduction. Use this no-cost, no-hassle program by contacting our fundraising partner, Donation Line, at 877-227-7487. Ask for us by name or extension No. 2864. Click here to read a list of FAQs.

Upcoming Event

March 14

Keratoconus Educational Seminar

This free seminar for people with KC and their families is on Saturday, March 14, at the Gavin Herbert Eye Institute at UC Irvine. More information and registration.