



Show a little foresight

Look after your eyes and they'll return the favour, writes SUE WHITE.

Good eyesight may be treasured by adults who lack it but Peter Grunwald's curiosity about eye health started earlier than most.

"I was three when I got my first glasses for astigmatism and myopia," says Grunwald, the author of *Eyebody* (Condevis Publishing). "They were almost bottle-thick lenses. At 18, I experimented with making my eyesight worse so I wouldn't have to go into the German army. I eventually started wondering if I could also make them better."

Grunwald is not alone in his desire for better eyesight. About 50 per cent of Australians wear glasses and according to the professor of optometry at Deakin University, Harrison Weisinger, another 10 per cent to 15 per cent of us probably should.

"By and large, visual problems dealt with by spectacles are due to the growth of the eye and the shape of the eye," Weisinger says.

"We call them optical conditions, like shortsightedness, and they're remedied by glasses. There is no cure that we know about. However,

we can certainly make lifestyle decisions that reduce our risk of developing eye diseases like macular degeneration."

Western medicine confirms that a healthy diet and exercise are generally beneficial for our eyes.

"What's good for our body in general is usually good for our eyes," Weisinger says. "Omega-3 fatty acids are important in visual development, so it is important to eat one or two fish meals a week. It's also important we get antioxidants, because the back of the eye is a very highly oxygenated part of the body. Vitamin B and beta-carotene are both important in the vision; if we don't get enough of those, we won't see properly."

Although Weisinger doesn't believe you can rid yourself of glasses, Grunwald begs to differ.

"Certain aspects of the eye are directly related to the physical body," he says.

"Just like in reflexology, where they press your toe and neck pain releases, symptoms like myopia, cataracts and glaucoma are directly related to parts of the physical body

such as back pain. It took 18 months of training before I didn't need my glasses any more."

He now teaches others how to improve their own eyesight naturally, through an approach that begins with the brain.

"People can have eye surgery to see clearly but the symptoms held within the brain aren't addressed," he says. "I'm supporting people to address their symptoms so that fatigue and weakening eyesight doesn't recur."

It may sound unusual to many but not to Allison Fahey. The Dorriggo-based yoga and Pilates teacher has been interested in natural eye health for decades and teaches techniques she learnt at the Yoga School of Perfect Eyesight in Pondicherry, India.

"The first thing to do is to blink regularly, to lubricate the eyes," she says. Fahey's second tip is to get the eyes moving. "We like to use our full range of movement in our joints; the eye muscles are the same," she says. "First look up and down, slowly. Then look left and right. It's quite hard as the muscles will be tight in

certain areas." Other steps include standing in the early morning sun and swaying side to side with closed eyes and gently covering them with the palm and concentrating on seeing black.

"When you have good eyesight, you should see black only; if you see other colours, simply visualise black," Fahey says. "It should be a pleasant experience."

Whether it's what you eat or how you move, natural eye health requires regular TLC.

"I'm in this because my own eyes can benefit from it," Fahey says.

Fact file

- Eyes tire when looking up close for long periods. When reading or using a computer, look into the distance for a couple of minutes every hour.
- Soothe tired eyes with a cool, moist face cloth for 10 minutes.
- Eye exams are free every two years under Medicare.