



## **juEYE** **Kirk Pengilly 30/06/10**

### **juEYE**

Have you had your eyes tested in the past two years? It's something we all should do to detect early signs of eye disease that could lead to vision loss. Make an appointment to do it in July – that's the focus of the Eye Foundation's "juEYE" campaign in 2010. To find out where you can be tested, or to donate to the Eye Foundation to support eye health research and development projects, visit [www.eyefoundation.org.au](http://www.eyefoundation.org.au)

### **What juEYE funds**

juEYE raises funds for the Eye Foundation's national collaborative research projects. These research projects include:

- **The Australian and New Zealand Registry of Advanced Glaucoma** – the establishment of the world's largest registry of advanced glaucoma cases will help identify future high risk individuals and accelerate research for new and improved patient treatments.
- **The Australian and New Zealand (Rare Eye Diseases) Surveillance Unit** – this project's aim is to collect information about rare eye diseases – including the environmental and genetic causes – to increase knowledge and expertise in how to better manage and treat rare conditions.
- **The Fight Retinal Blindness! Project** – this project was set up to establish a national system that tracks treatment outcomes for macular and retinal diseases. The project involves more than 10,000 patients each year.
- **The Minum Barreng National Indigenous Eye Health survey** – this project undertook a national survey of specific eye health issues in indigenous communities – the first in 30 years – and made several important recommendations to improve indigenous eye health services throughout Australia. The results of this project were released in late 2009 by the Governor-General, Her Excellency, Mrs Quentin Bryce AC.

### **The most common forms of eye disease**

The most common forms of eye disease in Australia include:

#### **Glaucoma**

An estimated one in 11 Australians will develop glaucoma. Half of those with glaucoma are undiagnosed. (Source: *Clear Insight: The Economic Impact and Cost of Vision Loss in Australia*).

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of eye diseases that occur when too much pressure develops inside one or both eyes. It is a leading cause of vision damage and blindness in people over 40 years of age, but it can affect people of any age. If glaucoma is detected early, treatment can prevent vision loss in most cases.

### **Macular degeneration**

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness in people over the age of 55. Macular degeneration is the physical disturbance of the centre of the retina, which is called the macular. We use the macular for reading, driving, recognising faces, watching television and for finely detailed work. Vision loss usually occurs gradually and can affect each eye differently.

### **Diabetic retinopathy**

Diabetic retinopathy is one of the major causes of vision loss in young people. Diabetes can cause progressive damage to the eye's retina and in the early stages of diabetic retinopathy, there are usually no symptoms. If it's diagnosed early, 90 per cent of blindness from diabetic retinopathy is preventable.

### **Cataract**

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness worldwide, and are particularly prevalent in the developing world where access to treatment is limited. A cataract is a cloudy area in the lens of the eye. The lens is mostly water and protein, with the protein arranged to let light pass through and focus on the retina. Sometimes the protein clumps together and clouds a small area of the lens. This is a cataract. Over time, the cataract may grow larger and cloud more of the lens, making it hard to see. Left untreated, cataracts can cause blindness.

### **Top tips for eye health:**

- Early detection and treatment is the best defence against eye disease. Get your eyes tested every two years by your family doctor, optometrist or ophthalmologist. If you notice any change in your vision, you should see your doctor, optometrist or ophthalmologist immediately.
- Stop smoking. Smoking kills healthy cells and can make you more susceptible to developing eye diseases.
- Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight or obese you could be at risk of developing diabetes which could lead to vision loss such as diabetic retinopathy.
- When in the sun, wear sunglasses with UV to protect your eyes from damaging UV rays.
- Eat a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, especially dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach and yellow vegetables such pumpkin and carrot, to help keep your eyes healthy. Adding fish that contain Omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon and tuna, and nuts such as almonds, brazil nuts and walnuts to your diet can help too.

- If you are concerned about your eyes or eyesight, the Eye Foundation recommends you seek advice immediately. Eye examinations can be performed by your family doctor, an ophthalmologist (medical eye specialist), or an optometrist.