



# save OUR Sight



N·Z·A·O

# 2006

***Save our Sight*** is an eye health awareness campaign led by the NZ Association of Optometrists which aims to reduce vision loss from preventable causes such as eye injury accidents, macular degeneration, glaucoma and other eye diseases.

This year ***Save our Sight*** is promoting ***vision for life***. From childhood to old age, vision is important and people need to act to protect themselves against eye injury and disease.

Around the world Baby Boomers are redefining what "old age" looks like and when it begins. For most of the ¼ million New Zealand Boomers who will celebrate their 60th birthday in 2006, it's just the beginning of another productive, active, and satisfying decade.

An active lifestyle is a healthy lifestyle but how will that pan out if you cannot see?

People who do not see well are less likely to cope with living independently. They rate their quality of life lower than people who do see well.

People with poor vision also have higher rates of depression, more falls and fractures, increased need for community and/or family support and need institutionalized care at an earlier age.

Put bluntly, poor eyesight is bad for you.

## *Save our Sight Themes for 2006*

This year we are highlighting the importance of **eye safety** and in particular the use of appropriate eye protection to avoid eye injury accidents. Worryingly, in New Zealand there are over 20,000 recorded eye injury accidents each year. Many of these occur in the home or garden and involve the use of power tools. More than 200 hospital admissions due to eye injuries occur in Auckland alone each year!

**PlaceMakers** will be involved in the 2006 campaign for August and through its **PlaceMakers** Trade Mailer will associate its name with the important public health issue of preventing eye injuries and blindness.

If people in New Zealand can be encouraged to take responsibility for using protective eyewear and for having routine health checks on their eyes the reduction in the number people losing sight each year could be quite significant.

The **Save our Sight** campaign is all about raising awareness of the importance of good vision and of the many simple ways to reduce threats to sight from disease, degeneration, and trauma. Incorporating an eye injury prevention message as part of the 2006 campaign will add strength and depth to the message of saving sight. Ordinary New Zealanders will be encouraged to think about eye safety and the value of protecting their eyes.

**Glaucoma NZ** is again an important SOS partner for the 2006 campaign and following on from last year's super successful testing for mayors event are this year launching a major postcard initiative. The message will be *'Don't lose sight of your family.'* Cards feature images of grandparents and grandchildren and have pre-printed text urging family members to have their eyes examined. The give-away postcards will be available from optometrists, ophthalmologists, and pharmacies. Special stocks have been printed for use during the month of August. These are for display in clinics and staff can encourage patients to take them away for mailing to family members.

Staff might also like to target clinic glaucoma patients with a letter explaining the **Save our Sight** campaign and provide them with a few postcards to send on to family members. We have a template letter that you can use or you can write your own.

**Save our Sight** will again put the focus on the importance of children's vision with many NZAO optometrists taking part in **Children's Eye Care Week** between 21 and 27 August. All babies require an eye check at birth and parents should be reminded of the importance of pre-school vision screening. Once at school, children will all take part in vision screening with the Vision Hearing Technician service and in August the VHTs will be sending almost 600 children for optometrist assessments because of vision problems picked up by parents, teachers or the screeners.

**Children's Eye Care Week** makes a huge contribution to the **Save our Sight** campaign and it would not be possible without the generous support of NZAO optometrists who donate their time for examinations or the philanthropy of wholesalers who generously provide frames and lenses free of charge.

**Save our Sight** is an opportunity to remind people of the importance of good vision and the need for regular eye exams.

**Healthy people need healthy eyes** and to maintain the active lifestyle that Baby Boomers are accustomed to, they need to build regular comprehensive eye exams into their well-care health regimen.

Here are a few sobering facts about eye health and advancing age that you can use:

- Age-related vision problems, like macular degeneration and glaucoma, strike often without warning or symptoms.
- Most vision loss is permanent and irreversible.
- Blindness and vision loss treble for each decade over the age of 40 years.
- By age 90 half of the population has some form of visual impairment and 1 in every 8 are blind.
- Blindness and vision loss may be preventable.

With the help of *Watties Nutrition News* we will see the Save our Sight messages about food and *Eating for Eye Health* distributed widely during August and September of 2006. Julie Dick of Heinz Watties is including information on healthy eye food in both the Nutrition News publication and the Food in a Minute email letter.

Practices can display their own information such as our *Lutein Scale for Selected Veg* or have some of the lutein rich vegetables in a basket instead of flowers in reception.

Saving sight is about applying the simple things we all should know – proper glasses and regular eye exams, protecting eyes from injury, smoking cessation and decreased UV exposure, healthy eating for healthy eyes plus keeping diabetes under control and being aware of glaucoma.

## *Vision for Life*

Save our Sight promotes five good ways we can keep **vision for life**:

### **1. *Protect against injury***

- Wear safety glasses in the workplace and when operating machines or power tools
- Protect your eyes when playing sports, especially racquet and ball sports
- Take care with fireworks, firearms, bungy cords and champagne corks
- Never look directly at the sun or an eclipse
- Irrigate your eyes immediately with water for 15 minutes if they are exposed to chemicals
- Prevent eye and skin burns from welding and snow reflection

### **2. *Look out for glaucoma***

- If you are over 40 years of age or have a family history of glaucoma have an eye examination every year

### **3. *Watch you don't get macular degeneration***

- Avoid smoking
- Eat plenty of green leafy vegetables
- Eat fish 2 – 3 times each week
- If there is a family history of macular degeneration have an eye exam every two years

### **4. *Prevent diabetic eye disease***

- If you have diabetes enrol in the diabetes eye screening program or have an eye exam every year
- Keep blood pressure, blood lipids and blood glucose levels under control
- Avoid smoking

### **5. *Keep good health***

- Avoid smoking
- Eat and drink in moderation
- Be sun smart and protect your eyes from UV with wrap around sunglasses
- See an optometrist or ophthalmologist regularly for early detection of eye problems

## *Save Our Sight Resources*

In this pack we have provided some resources for clinics to use during August for Save our Sight Month. To support this year's campaign the NZAO has developed advertising and media resources using the following propositions:

Sporting lifestyle

**Are you finding it hard to keep your eye on the ball?**

Travel lifestyle

**Are you finding it harder to see the world?**

DIY home decorating lifestyle

**Can you still hit the nail on the head?**

Driving independence lifestyle

**Are you still able to see the road ahead?**

