

OUR TOP TIPS FOR SAFE DRIVING IN WINTER

Through winter we end up driving in the dark much more than in the summer months. And while we might be able to see fine during the day, sometimes driving at night can feel harder on our eyes. This is because the low light levels at night cause your pupils to dilate, blurring your vision. Glare from headlights can also be temporarily blinding.

Here are our top tips on how you can be safer on the roads this winter:

▶ **Have your vision checked regularly**

It's important to get your vision checked regularly – we'd recommend every two years for most people. As we age our eye focus can change and some eye diseases become more common. Cataracts particularly can cause difficulties with night vision due to blur and glare. Other diseases can have no symptoms at all. If you do wear glasses or contacts already, it's an opportunity to make sure your lenses are in good condition and your prescription is up-to-date.

▶ **Make sure you have an anti-reflective coating on your glasses**

An anti-reflective coating on your glasses eliminates reflections which improves your night vision – reflections are dangerous because they reduce the contrast and clarity of your vision, they can also be quite distracting. An anti-reflective coating is also great if you work with computers.

▶ **Keep your windscreen and mirrors clean**

Streaks, smudges and road grime on your windscreen or mirrors refract light, increasing glare and reducing detail - make sure you clean the inside as well. It's also good to get into the habit of cleaning your wipers at the same time.

▶ **Clean your headlights**

Dirt and grime can build up on your headlights over time and this can significantly reduce the light output restricting your vision. Also check your headlights are aligned properly to help you see better and reduce glare for oncoming drivers.

▶ **Key night driving habits to get into:**

- o Flip your rear-view mirror to the night setting.
- o Take regular breaks when driving at night over long distances.
- o Don't look directly at the headlights of oncoming vehicles.

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HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR VISION THIS WINTER...

Hitting the slopes? Don't forget your eye care!

Snow and ice are reflective, so the sun's ultraviolet rays can reach your eyes from below as well as above – and not just when skiing or snowboarding. That's why it's especially important to have sunglasses or goggles if you are hitting the slopes, so make sure you invest in good quality eyewear that has UV protection.



Dry eyes worse during winter?

If you already have dry eyes, using heating throughout winter may worsen it. The treatment for dry eyes depends upon the individual cause, so it is important to speak to your Optometrist if your eyes feel dry.

Easy ways to minimise the discomfort of dry eyes in winter:

- ▶ Drink lots of water to keep your eyes (and body) hydrated.
- ▶ Lower the temperature in rooms when possible and don't let it get too hot.
- ▶ Use a humidifier to prevent the air in your home from drying out. Opening windows for a few minutes on cold days can also help.
- ▶ Blink more often. We tend to blink less when using a computer, reading or doing anything that needs a lot of visual focus – and this makes dry eyes worse.



Remember the 20:20:20 rule on winter days spent indoors

People tend to watch more television and spend more time using computers during winter. Remember to take breaks and operate the 20:20:20 rule; every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and focus your eyes on something at least 20 feet away.

Getting the lighting right in winter

The winter months bring low levels of light which can make close tasks more difficult due to hindered vision – especially if you already have existing vision difficulties. Make sure you have a decent amount of light when reading or doing anything which requires close work and focus. Even better, get a light that you can manoeuvre and direct exactly where you need it.

Elderly fall rates increase during winter

Many people do not recognise the link between poor vision and falls in the elderly, and this is especially important in winter when the nights are longer. Regular eye tests are so important as we get into our golden years. And, people with a Gold Card can get a reduced price eye exam at Visique Greerton on a Wednesday – bookings are essential!



Sight Gags by Scott Lee, O.D.



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