



Tips for Careworkers: Eye Care

What it is: Eye care is attention to the health and comfort of a person's eyes.

Why it matters: Towards the end of life, dry eyes are common and can cause discomfort. Eye secretions (fluid from the eye) can also cause discomfort when they collect around the eye.

More generally, poor eyesight is common in older people. It affects the risk of falls, and impacts emotional health, independence, and participation in usual activities.

What I need to know: There are many reasons that older people may have poor eye health.

These include:

- impaired vision due to:
 - cataracts (clouding of the eye)
 - age-related macular degeneration
- improper contact lens hygiene
- prolonged wearing of contact lenses

Start the conversation by asking the older person if they usually wear glasses or if they need help to see.

In advanced illness or as the person approaches death there may be changes in their eye health and appearance. This can include dryness, bulging of the eye, not being able to close eyes, or build-up of secretions on eyelids.

Do When attending to eye care make sure that your hands are clean.

Do Let nursing/supervisory staff know if the older person's eyes seem to be different to usual. This includes any:

- build-up of eye secretions
- signs of irritation or redness
- discomfort or if unable to close eyes.

Do If removing eye secretions:

- use a sterile cotton ball moistened with sterile water or normal saline over the lid margins
- wipe from the inner corner of the eye to the outer edge
- use a new cotton ball and repeat until secretions are clear
- use a separate pad for each eye.

Do Let nursing/supervisory staff know if the older person is experiencing new problems with reading, daily activities, or mobility.

Name:

My reflections:

What role do I have in eye care of the people in my care?

What changes in an older person's activity might I notice if they are having problems with eyesight?

My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice
Tip Sheets:
Oral Care
Recognising Deterioration
Signs of Imminent Death

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit
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