

VISION TIPS FOR SAFE DRIVING AT NIGHT

FACT SHEET

High-intensity discharge (HID) and light-emitting diode (LED) lamps have been used in the headlights of new cars for over a decade. These lamps are often brighter and emit more blue light than the old, incandescent lamps. When aimed and aligned properly, they project farther in front of the car, provide better illumination, and make colors of illuminated objects appear more realistic. They are a definite improvement for the vehicle driver.

However, many drivers who approach an oncoming vehicle with the new headlights often complain of glare and that the lights are too bright. Interestingly, studies have shown that **disability glare**, that is, glare that blocks an object from your view, is not significantly worse with the new headlights. But **discomfort glare**—which is annoying but does not block your view of an object—is increased. In addition, it could appear worse if you have dry eye, any cataracts, complications of contact lens wear, or other eye conditions that reduce night vision, such as age-related macular

degeneration or diabetic retinopathy.

A visit to your eye doctor is always a good idea when encountering such problems. Here are some additional tips:

Look Away!

- Never look directly at an oncoming vehicle, regardless of the type of headlights it has.
- If an oncoming vehicle's headlights seem too bright, or if the driver does not dim his or her high beams, ease off the gas, try not to look directly at the car's

lights and maintain your position in your travel lane by monitoring the lane marker or fog line until the offending vehicle passes.

Keep it Clean!

- Clean your windshield, outside and inside: a dirty, streaked or fogged windshield can cause glare and reduce visibility.
- Replace windshield wipers, as necessary.
- Clean headlight coverings/lenses: dirt, snow or ice on headlights can reduce

their brightness and range.

Adjust Your Lights!

- Use high beams when appropriate.
- Ensure that headlights are properly positioned, aimed and aligned (may require assistance of an auto mechanic or service professional).
- Install and use fog lamps when appropriate; do not use high beams in fog.
- Turn off inside lights and turn down dashboard lights to the minimum level at which you can



see them; this reduces glare from lights that you are not looking at or toward.

Slow Down!

- Stopping distance increases with vehicle speed and poor weather conditions, such as rain, snow or ice; drive only as fast as you are able to bring your vehicle to a complete stop within the distance illuminated by your headlights and based on conditions of the road surface.

Keep it Clear!

- Prescription eyeglass lenses should have anti-reflection coating in order to minimize reflections from dashboard lights, street lights and lights from other vehicles.
- Do not wear sunglasses, yellow, amber or other colored lenses: the environment can seem brighter, but all tinted lenses actually block light, potentially causing difficulty identifying traffic signals and signs and seeing low-contrast or dimly lit people and objects.
- Increase the eyes' protective macular pigment to improve visual performance;

this can be assessed by your eye doctor and improved by eating lutein and zeaxanthin-rich foods such as kale, collard greens and spinach, or via appropriate supplementation.

Remember to Blink!

- Increased concentration can reduce blink rate, which can cause or exacerbate dry eye symptoms, especially when wearing contact lenses.
- Aim dashboard air vents away from the face and eyes to avoid excessive drying of the eyes.
- If you know you have dry eye symptoms

or wear contact lenses, instill a drop of lubricating eye drops before starting to drive.

Be Considerate of Others!

- Dim your high beams when there are oncoming vehicles or if you are behind a vehicle.
- Ensure that headlights are properly positioned, aimed and aligned.
- Use only replacement headlamps and auxiliary lights approved by the vehicle manufacturer for your car; certain after-market lights may even be illegal in some states.

Visit Your Eye Doctor!

- Some patients require different eyeglasses for driving at night compared to daylight.
- Patients who have recently had laser refractive surgery can experience glare and halos for some time after the surgery.
- Symptoms of glare, halos and reduced ability to see low-contrast or dimly lit objects can indicate the presence of early cataracts, complications of contact lens wear, or other eye conditions: time for an eye exam!



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