



MATHEW MCCARTHY, MERCURY NEWS SERVICES

Nurse Michelle Wilhelm is a checklist educator in the surgical-safety-checklist program at Kitchener's Grand River Hospital.

## Simple eye exam can catch leading cause of vision loss

Johanna Weidner

**WATERLOO REGION** — A simple eye exam can catch a leading and irreversible cause of vision loss before too much damage is done, yet many older Canadians don't make regular visits to an eye doctor.

Glaucoma can be detected by an eye specialist long before a person notices that there's a problem.

"It's really thought of as a silent disease," said ophthalmologist Dr. Yvonne Buys. "For most people, there really are no symptoms until the disease is far advanced."

This is World Glaucoma Week.

A new CNIB study released Monday found nearly half of Canadians 40 and older do not get regular eye exams. A quarter of people with a family history of eye disease — the primary risk factor for glaucoma — don't have routine exams.

Most only see an eye doctor if they're experiencing symptoms such as blurry vision and itchy or red eyes. However, glaucoma has no symptoms and is usually painless. Only half of the 400,000 Canadians with glaucoma know they have it.

Glaucoma is the second leading cause of vision loss in seniors after cataracts. Cataracts are treatable. Vision loss caused by glaucoma is irreversible, and treatment with medication or surgery can only stop or slow the disease.

Glaucoma affects the nerve of the eye, first causing loss of peripheral vision and then central vision, said Buys, past president of the Canadian Glaucoma Society and professor in the University of Toronto's ophthalmology and vision sciences department.

The main risk factor is elevated pressure in the eye, although that's not the case for all types of the disease. Other risk factors include age and ethnicity. Anyone 40 and older should have an eye exam every one to three years, Buys said. Those 65 and older should have their eyes checked every one or two years.

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# Making a list

As of April 1, hospitals must use surgical checklists to improve patient safety

Johanna Weidner

**WATERLOO REGION** — Surgeon Dr. Peter Stevenson stands next to the patient on the operating table and the room goes quiet.

Before anything is done, he asks the patient for a few key details.

"Now you need to tell me your name."

"Marianna Graham," she replies.

"And what are we going to be doing today?"

"You're doing my right hip replacement," she says.

Stevenson holds a list of items that need to be checked before the surgery can begin. After talking to the patient, he asks his team about medications and allergies, laboratory results, X-rays and instruments.

Once he gets through the list, Stevenson reassures the patient.

"Now we know everything is fine."

This process of verifying what surgery is being done and that everything is reviewed and ready will soon be standard procedure in all Ontario hospitals performing surgeries.

Starting April 1, hospitals must use a surgical safety checklist with the goal of improving patient safety.

A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine last year found complications and death from surgery are noticeably decreased with the use of a surgical checklist.

Eight hospitals around the world, includ-



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Nurse Irene Harder (left), Dr. Quoc Nguyen and Dr. Peter Stevenson go through a surgical safety checklist before Marianna Graham's recent hip surgery at Grand River Hospital.

ing one in Toronto, used a checklist made by the World Health Organization for a year and kept track of complications, from infection to death. The rate of death was 1.5 per cent before the checklist was introduced and 0.8 per cent afterwards. Complications dropped from 11 per cent to seven per cent.

Considering an estimated 234 million operations are done yearly around the world and complications are often preventable, better surgical safety checks could save many lives.

The requirement for Ontario hospitals was announced last fall.

➤ SEE CHECKLIST ON PAGE B12

## So, you want to get fit? Here are three secrets to get in shape

If you are trying to find the best way to get rid of excess weight, lose body fat and get that healthy, fit body you have always wanted, then listen up. I am about to share with you three great training secrets that will help you get the body of your dreams.



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### Secret Number 1

Move your body! Get off the couch and take a walk, go for a jog, ride your bike, run with your kids in the park or walk your dog. You must do something most days of the week that gets your heart rate up. If you want to reach your weight-loss goals sooner, then you need to up the intensity. I recommended high-intensity interval training a couple of times a week. High Intensity Interval Training, a.k.a. HIIT, is the best way to burn calories and lose fat. The idea of HIIT is to complete short sprints that will ultimately burn more calories and cause a greater fat loss. Your body doesn't become accustomed to the exercise as the short bursts are shocks to your body that can be much more effective than exercising at a low pace for a longer period of time. This doesn't mean you need to take up sprinting, just add quick

bursts during your workout.

If your cardio choice is walking then all you need to do is this: Start off by walking at a moderate pace for 15 minutes. You should be going at a speed where you can still carry on a conversation. After the 15 minutes are over, you will walk as fast as you can — this is where the high-intensity part starts — for exactly one minute. Make sure to keep the fastest pace possible. Conversation during this period will not be your goal. After that minute, slow down and walk for another minute. Repeat the 60-second intervals five times, and then walk to cool down.

It is also important to do some type of resistance training. A simple routine of body-weight exercises will work all your muscles. You will not only get stronger but your body will soon burn more calories.

### Secret Number 2

Take a look at your diet. Be honest, are you really making wise food choices and eating in moderation? The saying you are what you eat is so true. That does not mean 'fast food' makes you fast! Nor does it mean skipping meals and taking in extremely low calories for your body will help you lose weight faster.

Eating proper portions of the right foods not only provides your body with critical vitamins, minerals and nutrients, but also keeps your body weight in balance because it supports your energy needs. Too much food — no matter what it is — leads to weight gain. Just because the food choice is 'healthy' doesn't make it calorie free. By making simple adjustments in your daily food intake you can lose weight and unhealthy body fat.

Eat a variety of healthy foods. Watch your portions and leave the second helpings for a meal the next day.

### Secret Number 3

Stop making excuses! Losing weight is not

easy. It requires planning and perseverance. Along your weight-loss journey, you will face many obstacles. The biggest obstacles tend to be your own excuses. The funny thing about excuses is that none of them have any merit. If you want to achieve your weight-loss goals, you are going to have to stop making excuses and start making changes.

The difference between those who reach their health goals and those who don't is simple: The people who are successful change their unhealthy habits for healthy ones. They no longer make excuses.

Start your journey to better health today. If you truly want to lose weight then stop talking about it and start doing it.

The secrets are out! Losing weight truly is as basic as exercising correctly, consuming the proper amount of healthy foods and not making excuses.

Guelph-based personal trainer Marla Arndt owns and operates Frameworks Fitness Studio. She can be reached via her website at [www.frameworksfitness.com](http://www.frameworksfitness.com). Her column appears every other week.

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