

5-21-10 Oh, Say Can You See?

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a.....challenging world it would be to lose my sight.

May is the month of awareness for many health issues, including several involving sight. It is Healthy Vision Month for the National Eye Institute and Prevent Blindness.Org, Lupus Awareness Month, and Ultraviolet Awareness Month. While we are protecting our eyes from harmful UV rays, we can also honor Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month and since we'll be putting our minds at ease with all our protective measures, we can also pay tribute to Mental Health Month!

Of course, it isn't really that easy or that much fun, but, learning how to protect our eyes and skin from UV rays can be rewarding in unforeseen ways. For instance, when I was diagnosed with Lupus and was told that I had to wear sun block at all times, I was not expecting the doctor to add, "even under fluorescent lights". Light bulbs emit ultraviolet rays? Who knew? While your skin might not be as sensitive to fluorescent light bulbs as mine, I'll bet you don't like them. They give off a weird light. They flicker. They glare. Sometimes they hum. And I bet you've suspected that some of your headaches are from them. But, the pressure is on to replace incandescent bulbs with more energy efficient ones, so what are we to do?

I got to thinking that we should be able to put sun glasses on light bulbs and, it turns out, that others had the same idea. Fortunately for me, they thought of it a long time ago and developed it already. I purchased some light purple tinted tubes, acting as the "sun glasses", to cover the fluorescent tubes in my office to block the UV rays and, to my delight, they also eliminated most of my headaches. That happy side effect also applied to my non-Lupus co-worker. The room has a pleasing, natural color light to it, compared to the glare of other rooms. Now, if I can just de-clutter by moving some of that vaccination stuff and landfill documents and emergency preparedness stuff and boxes of alternative sewerage committee documents, I'll be able to use the pretty light to actually find my desk!

Even if you don't have Lupus, you might be interested in living with a more pleasing light, preventing your art work and upholstery from fading and getting rid of those nasty headaches by purchasing some of these filters. I bought mine from NaturaLux at 951-735-6285 or naturalux.com. When I called with a question, the owner, Kevin A. Kirschner answered himself. He can't help but be enthusiastic about his company and products, for he knows he is helping people and that is rewarding for him. It is out of sincere concern for people with Lupus, that he offers them a discount. NaturaLux™ Filters are recommended by the Lupus Foundation of America and the Lupus Support Network.

So, the filters help prevent my skin from burning and becoming inflamed but my eyes are so sensitive to any light, that I have to wear sunglasses and a brimmed hat most of the time. Not being a member of the Red Hats Society or in possession of the looks of Audrey Hepburn, it's not much of a fashion statement; it's just a necessity. But on children, hats and sun glasses look cute. Real ones that actually block the ultraviolet rays, as opposed to disks of colored plastic that don't, are now available for all ages, even infants and toddlers. Check out the brand "Real Kids Shades". They block 100% of UVA and UVB rays and are made for active kids by being shatterproof and held on with a soft neoprene band. For the older child, who would rather go blind than be cute and safe, they also offer "Xtreme Chill" and Xtreme Convertible", which really are cool looking. Maybe they don't need to know that cool is cool and safe is cool, too.

Well, I didn't have room to write about Lyme Disease Awareness Month but just a few days ago I saved a deer tick in Scotch tape to show you if you stop by my office. I also did not have time or room to write about May being National Celiac Disease Awareness Month but I did eat my gluten free bread while writing this.

May is a busy month. Let's be aware and let's have some fun preventing problems with that awareness. Maybe, just maybe, I think to myself, what a wonderful world, we can help it to be.

Cathleen Drinan is the Health Agent for the Town of Halifax and appreciates first hand many of May's health topics. Have a topic? Contact her at 781 293 6768 or cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us