



PRESS RELEASE

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Sophie Thompson raises the importance of eye tests this National Eye Health Week

Actress Sophie Thompson is working with Specsavers to highlight the importance of regular eye tests this National Eye Health Week (September 23-29) to ensure we don't lose the picture.

It's an issue close to Sophie's heart after her grandmother and mum were diagnosed with glaucoma, one of the leading causes of blindness in the world.

Sophie's said she's so pleased that National Eye Health Week exists as it helps put a spotlight on the need for everyone to take care of their eyes as well as highlighting the conditions that could easily be preventable through regular checks.

'I know first-hand the impact that impaired vision can have on people, which is why I hope to help raise awareness of eye checks. It's just so important that people take their eye health seriously.'

Glaucoma affects more than 700,000 people across the UK and a whopping 64 million people around the globe. The condition is often symptomless which means many don't realise they have it, putting them at risk of losing their sight.

The TV, theatre and film actress now gets her eyes tested regularly to monitor for the condition. 'There's a history of glaucoma in my family, my mother and grandmother both had the condition, so it's important that I'm vigilant -

'My gran's sight got progressively worse, and became very restricted. Luckily, mum's glaucoma was detected much earlier, which means she can manage it with drops

three times a day. Had it not been caught when it was, it could have been a very different story. That's why me and my sister Emma always make sure we get our eyes checked regularly.'

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of eye conditions in which the main nerve in the eye (the optic nerve) becomes damaged, usually as a result of increased pressure in the eye. The most common type of glaucoma (primary open angle glaucoma) starts very slowly, and to begin with there are no symptoms. So some people don't realise they have the condition until it is fairly advanced.

Dr Nigel Best, Specsavers clinical spokesperson says: 'There are several factors which can increase your risk of developing glaucoma. As in Sophie's case, a family history of the disease increases the chances, but other risk factors include those who have black-African or Asian heritage as well as those who have higher levels of short sightedness. Of course, age also needs to be considered as two in every 100 people over the age of 40 are affected with the condition.

'The good news is glaucoma can generally be treated effectively if detected early, and in most cases, daily eye drops are used.'

As a result Sophie has her eyes monitored with an Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) machine. This is a cutting-edge piece of equipment - usually found in hospital eye departments but now available in more than half of Specsavers stores - it's used for a variety of functions including screening and management of conditions such as age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

Karen Osborn Chief Executive of the International Glaucoma Association (IGA) says: 'We regularly hear from people who have permanently lost sight to glaucoma because of late diagnosis. People are often angry and upset to learn that simple regular visits to their local high street optometrist could have detected the condition. The earlier treatment starts, the more likely that someone will retain useful sight for life.'

Your eyes can reveal a lot about your health so it's really important to have regular eye tests – once every two years, or more often if recommended by your optometrist.

To find out more or book your next appointment head to your nearest Specsavers store or visit www.specsavers.co.uk.

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