

# ORGANIC LIVING

By

Robert Rodale

## New Ways To Keener Eyesight

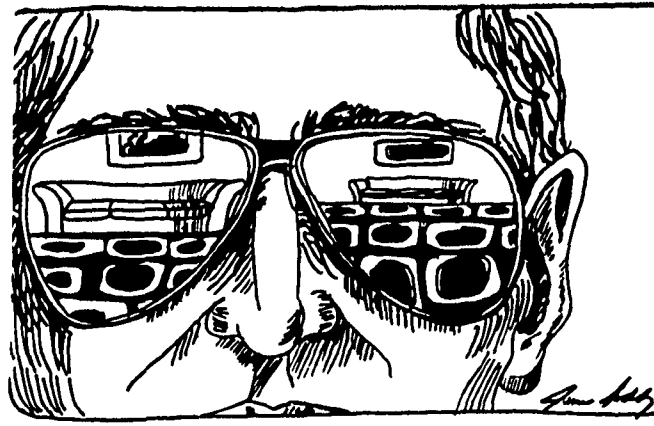
Every year, hundreds of thousands of Americans have their eyes examined only to be told that they need glasses. So, they resolutely march out, get their prescription and wind up wearing glasses or contact lenses for the rest of their lives.

The science of treating eye disorders has made great strides that have only recently been publicized. These developments point to one fact: There is a possibility that you can cure your problem without resorting to the final solution of glasses or contact lenses.

A growing body of eye specialists believe that sight problems can be cleared up through everything from diet to exercise to lenses that actually correct a deficiency.

Diet may play a part in causing eye problems, said Dr. William M. Ludlam, an optometrist who is formerly from New York and now conducting research in Oregon. He cites the Eskimos as examples.

Grandparents of present-day Eskimos had few cases of



myopia, or nearsightedness. Today's generation of Eskimos is undergoing vast changes. "This near-epidemic of myopia may be a combination of many different factors," Dr. Ludlam said. "This is the first generation to read. It's the first to use electrical lights and it's the first generation to eat a non-protein diet. They're eating everything from popcorn to Coke."

Dr. Ludlam has been clearing up cases of myopia through the use of "positive lenses," or simple reading glasses.

The eye focuses through a process called accommodation. This means that when a person looks up from close work, through muscle action, the eye adjusts and brings a distant object into focus.

When nearsightedness sets in, usually over a long period of time, Dr. Ludlam fits his patients with positive lenses. These reading glasses tend to push the individual's close visual environment back, thus helping the accommodation process. Eventually, says Dr. Ludlam, who has had over 20 years of experience with the technique, the nearsightedness is corrected and the individual doesn't have to have glasses anchored on his nose for a lifetime.

Exercises are also said to help. Dr. Marilyn B. Rossanes-Berrett, a psychologist and director of the Gestalt Center for Psychotherapy and Training in New York, has developed a series of exercises and sight-training techniques that she claims can help a person to strengthen his or her eyes to the point where he never needs glasses or can discard them if previously worn.

The exercises, developed over 25 years, range from swinging back and forth to help force blood up to the eyes to taking deep breaths to get oxygen there. As with many unconventional medical treatments, exercising or using positive lenses to improve vision has had its share of criticism from traditional medical authorities, which is not entirely unfounded.

These techniques may not work for all people. But since

vision fades ever so slowly, you can afford to find out if they will work for you. If they don't, you can always turn to glasses or contact lenses.

If you are eventually forced to wear glasses, you should make sure they are the proper prescription. Mistakes usually occur when a patient takes a prescription to a third party to have it filled, says Dr. Carl Cordova, a Bucks County (Pa.) optometrist.

"I've seen patients come back to me with glasses that were 100 percent in the wrong direction," he says. "Sometimes it's a year or two before the mistake is discovered. But, it's amazing what people will learn to live with."

The most important thing you can do to help yourself is to make sure you have the proper prescription. Ask your optometrist to make sure. Then, if you still think you have a problem, get another opinion.

A good prescription should correct a patient's vision. After a day or two of possible disorientation, the glasses should feel good and the eyes should become adjusted to them. Any longer period of adjustment may mean that the lenses are the wrong ones for you and that you may need a new set.

Vision is valuable—too valuable to take chances with. But when you go to an eye doctor and he tells you that you need glasses, it is worth avoiding a lifetime of inconvenience to shop around for an alternative.

Your eyes didn't go bad overnight, and it will take time to correct your vision, if indeed it can be corrected without resorting to glasses. Don't accept what the first optometrist tells you without a second or even third opinion. Remember, a lifetime of new—often stronger—lens prescriptions face you if you wind up wearing glasses.

(Editor's Note: The opinions appearing in "Organic Living" are those of its author, Robert Rodale, an independent columnist. Rodale's comments do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Lancaster Farming editor or anyone else on the Lancaster Farming staff.)



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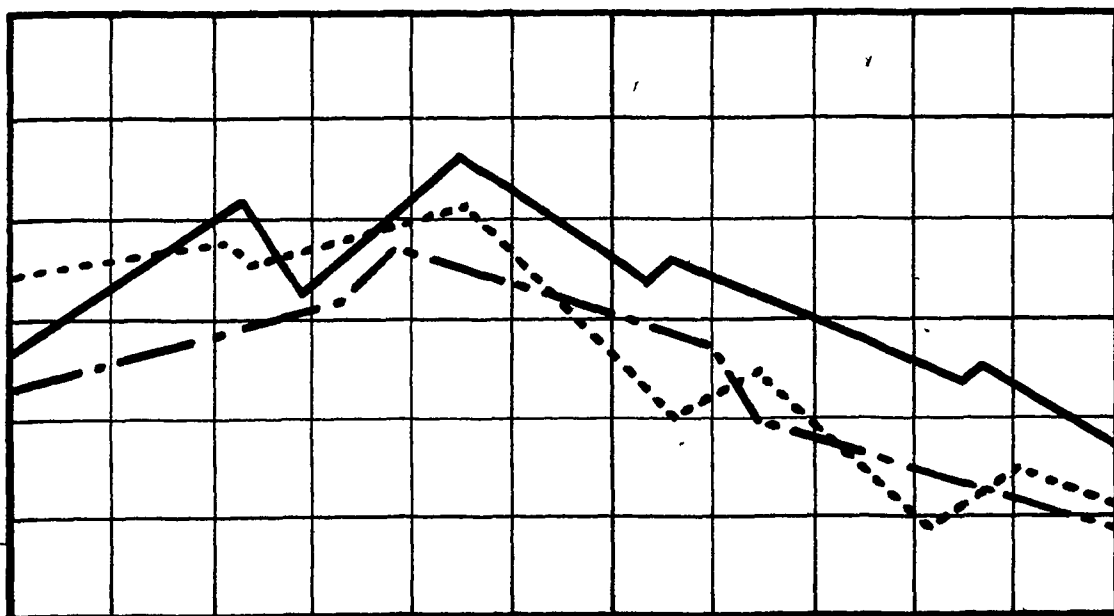
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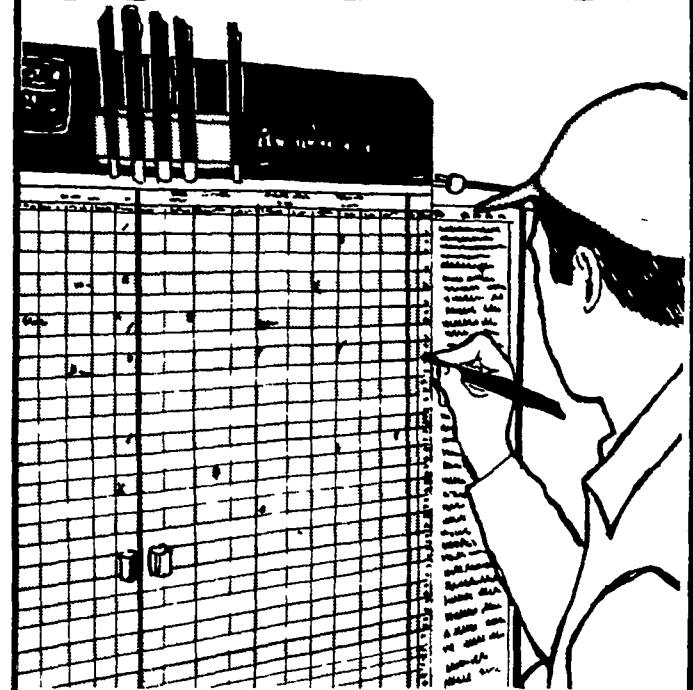
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