

## Preventative eye care in Hays County



Westlake Eye Specialists Certified Ophthalmic Assistant Michael Way performs a LipiFlow treatment on a patient with Dry Eye. Photo courtesy of Westlake Eye Specialists

LANCE WINTER  
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An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That's what the proverb says. But Zarmeena Vendal, M.D. with Westlake Eye Specialists in Kyle, along with Michael Way, would tell you it's true as it relates to ocular health.

These two are the only eye specialists in the county performing some revolutionary techniques which help aid in the treatment of what has become a common problem for people of all ages – Dry Eye.

"Dry Eye has been around for a long time. We used to treat just the symptoms by providing drops," Way said. "But today we're able to photograph the gland which helps us determine its health."

Once the gland is examined, Way said it

enables them to determine what kind of treatment is needed.

"If LipiFlow is needed we can administer it to patients who claim almost instant relief," Way said.

What is LipiFlow? It's a mechanical device Way said, where a scleral shell is inserted into the eye, just behind the lid, which heats the Meibomian Glands and massages them. Eventually, any blockage is pushed away from the gland in the eyelids. Once the obstructions are removed it allows the production of the oils which make up the protective layer of the eye.

Way said Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) treatments are equally effective.

IPL treatments expose an intense light onto the skin below the eye. When the light is absorbed it generates heat which melts the blockages in the Meibomian Gland as

well. The positive side of the treatment is that ophthalmologist can see immediately what come out of the gland – if it's solid or liquid - and see if the glands are functioning properly.

Way said many factors cause Dry Eye, including: age, certain medical conditions like diabetes, a patient's environment and how long they spend at a computer, rheumatoid arthritis...even Vitamin A deficiency, to name a few.

"We have glands in our upper and lower eyelids, roughly 40," Way said. "As we get older we tend to lose a few. We can't regrow glands, so the goal is to get them healthy."

Though LipiFlow works well, Way said it's IPL that has people talking.

"IPO treatments can be performed every six months," Way said. "People with severe Dry Eye following the treatments have a

couple of weeks of pure bliss. After they come in for their second, third and fourth treatment they ask, 'when can I do it again?'"

Vendal said their industry has become much more proactive in looking at issues regarding ocular health.

"We're able to image things much earlier," she said. "Now we can image things ahead of time, before you get uncomfortable. It's preventative care."

Vendal said a standard exam, which most insurance providers cover at 100 percent, will reveal if a patient is a candidate for Dry Eye and if treatment is needed.

"I think it's important to gather information ahead of time," Vendal said. "Not years down the road when your miserable. Treat you're eyes the way they deserve to be treated."

## Mosquitoes & Disease

TEXAS MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

As summer heats up, you may find yourself swatting that occasional seasonal annoyance, the mosquito. For most people, the bite is just a temporary irritation; but for some, it can be life-changing – even life-threatening.

Mosquitoes, ticks and fleas can spread diseases like Zika and West Nile virus, and some lesser-known ones like dengue fever and murine typhus. Texas' warm climate makes the state a hotbed for these diseases spread by those insect "vectors."

"Texas is probably the most vulnerable state in the union to these diseases," said Peter J. Hotez, MD, head of the National School of Tropical Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Despite disease surveillance by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the June issue of Texas Medicine magazine reports vector-borne illnesses are underreported. Complicating that is the difficulty in diagnosing some of the diseases, which can look like other illnesses.

Zika is a good example: The virus' symptoms often look like the flu – fever, joint pain and rash. And tests for the disease aren't always accurate or easy to interpret.

To even be tested, patients must first feel sick enough to visit their physician, said Dr. Hotez. The physician then must recognize the symptoms could indicate a tropical disease and arrange appropriate tests, which can be more complex than a simple lab test. "It requires all three stars to align before you can diagnose somebody," said Dr. Hotez.

A study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in May found the number of people in the United States who experienced insect-borne diseases tripled to 96,000 between 2004 and 2016. In addition, nine new vector diseases were discovered or introduced during that time.

Regulatory and commercial roadblocks

have sidelined vaccines that could help prevent the diseases. Texas' best short-term defense, say the experts, is better disease surveillance, mosquito control and education.

House Bill 3576, passed by the 2017 Texas Legislature, calls for DSHS to track, study, and prevent the spread of Zika and some other communicable diseases. DSHS now tests pregnant women in nine Texas counties along the U.S.-Mexico border where Zika is most likely to spread. DSHS and the local health departments follow up on positive results.

Mosquito control is erratic because some Texas communities don't have the resources to support it.

Better physician and public education is needed. Many doctors don't have a lot of firsthand experience with vector-borne diseases, said Scott Weaver, PhD, principal investigator for the

Western Gulf Center of Excellence for Vector-Borne Diseases

at The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. Knowing which ones are common in their area and advising patients about those diseases can help, he said.

"Physicians in Corpus Christi know murine typhus in their sleep," said Jane Siegel, MD, a Corpus Christi pediatric infectious disease specialist and chair of TMA's Committee on Infectious Diseases. "People who haven't seen it a lot have to ask for information about it."

She says physicians need to routinely ask patients about their travel in and out of the country, and consider the potential for seeing vector-borne illnesses in their patients.

"When we're in the height of an outbreak, like Zika in Dallas, we (physicians) tend to ask about it. But then we tend to relax. Somehow it needs to be standardized and incorporated into our practice," Dr. Siegel said.

TMA is the largest state medical society in the nation, representing more than 51,000 physician and medical student members. It is located in Austin and has 110 component county medical societies around the state. TMA's key objective since 1853 is to improve the health of all Texans.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### Gentle Yoga

WHEN: Tuesdays, 9-10:15 a.m.  
WHERE: The Price Center  
WHAT: The first class is free and \$10 after.

### Easy Tai Chi

WHEN: Tuesdays, 9-10 a.m. & 2-3 p.m.  
WHERE: The Price Center  
WHAT: Low impact Tai Chi, \$5 a class.

### Zumba Gold

WHEN: Tuesdays, 10-11 a.m.  
WHERE: The Price Center  
WHAT: A modified, slower-paced Zumba class, \$6 a class.

### Community Dance Class

WHEN: Tuesdays, 10:15 a.m.  
WHERE: The Price Center  
WHAT: Dr. Cindy Gratz is teaching a free beginning jazz dance class.

### Get Schooled Tuesdays Lip Sync

WHEN: Tuesdays, 11 p.m.  
WHERE: Stonewall Warehouse  
WHAT: Chitah Daniels Kennedy, DJ Kira Light and The Stonewall Riot Squad. 18+ are \$5, 21+ are free.

### Overeaters Anonymous

WHEN: Tuesdays, 12 p.m.  
WHERE: First Lutheran Church  
INFO: 661-435-5757.

### Welcome Home Groups

WHEN: Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.  
WHERE: Calvary Baptist Church  
WHAT: A men's support group for active military and veterans struggling with issues and addictions related to PTSD  
INFO: 512-667-4112

### San Marcos Al-Anon Meeting

WHEN: Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m.  
WHERE: First Lutheran Church  
INFO: 512-757-3585

### San Marcos Bluebonnet Lions Meeting

WHEN: First Tuesday, 12 p.m.  
WHERE: Saltgrass Steakhouse  
WHAT: Come as a guest and learn about Bluebonnet Lions Club which is an affiliate of Lions Clubs International. Community service projects support many non-profit organizations in San Marcos.

### AMVETS Post TX-104

WHEN: First Tuesdays, 5 p.m.  
WHERE: San Marcos Housing Authority Allen Wood Homes, Senior Center  
INFO: 512-393-3310

### The Gathering Country Music Show & Dance

WHEN: July 3, 7-10 p.m.  
WHERE: Geronimo VFW 8456  
WHAT: Country Music Show featuring Tommy Horton, plus a great house band. VFW hamburger kitchen at 5:30 p.m.  
INFO: 830-305-8829

### Storytime

WHEN: July 3, 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.  
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library  
WHAT: Children are invited to the library for great stories, songs, and fun.

### Family Night! Miss Molly Concert

WHEN: July 3, 7 to 7:30 p.m.  
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library  
WHAT: Families enjoy sing-along songs and danceable tunes.

### Summerfest

WHEN: July 4, 6 p.m.  
WHERE: San Marcos Plaza Park  
WHAT: Come out to San Marcos Plaza Park for the city's annual 4th of July celebration featuring live music, a children's parade, a patriotic costume contest, food vendors and a grand finale fireworks display.

### Independence Day Boat & Fireworks on the Rooftop

WHEN: July 4, 7:30 p.m.  
WHERE: The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment  
WHAT: The Meadows Center will host a Fourth of July event at Spring Lake for guests of all ages to enjoy a unique celebration of American Independence. Join us for an exclusive evening glass-bottom boat tour for breathtaking views of the sun setting over Spring Lake. Enjoy the view of the San Marcos Fireworks Show from our rooftop and watch the fireworks glow against the crystal clear waters of Spring Lake! Limited seating will be available, so guests are encouraged to bring chairs. Snacks and refreshments will be sold during the fireworks show.