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mind, the experts advise:

▼ Always shop for your shoes at the end of the day, "when your feet are a little swollen," Schinke said. "It's very common for women to buy them too small."

▼ Ignore the number on the shoe. Go with what fits and is comfortable, even if it's a larger size than you traditionally wear. Like clothing, shoe sizes among manufacturers can vary. Also, opt for trying a wider width, if necessary. "A lot of women don't think to try on the wide width to see if it's comfortable," Schinke said.

▼ When choosing a pointy-toed style, look for shoes with toe boxes that start narrowing after the ball of the foot, which will lessen toe cramming.

▼ Look for brands that have more padding and support in them, which can help reduce ball and arch pain.

▼ Consider an insert or orthotic for the ball or arch of the foot. You can buy them at most pharmacies and shoe stores. Just be careful not to add too much bulk to the shoe, which could lead to a tighter fit and more problems, cautions Erdman. "You should take any type of pads or inserts with you when you try on shoes," he said.

▼ Opt for shoes made out of supple materials with as few seams as possible. "Avoid seams, if you can, in the toe box," Erdman added.

▼ Customized orthotics can be made for dress shoes for about \$300 to \$400 a pair, said Schinke. A podiatrist can make the supports based on molds of your feet.

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New lens corrects cataracts and astigmatism

Ruth Ann McPeak wore contacts for some 20 years.

"I was nearsighted, farsighted and I had astigmatism," said McPeak of New London.

Aging only made things worse. Her vision began to turn cloudy in recent years; she had cataracts.

Last summer, she opted for surgery. To her delight, Dr. Michael Vrabc of Appleton

On the Web

For more information about the Toric lens and cataract surgery, visit www.valleyeye.com or call 920-739-4361 or 800-344-4443.

Eye Associates corrected all of her vision problems with a single cataract surgery in each eye.

"Now I wear nothing, except my clothes," joked McPeak, a teacher at New London High School. "It's a whole new world out there.

"I couldn't believe how much I was missing before. I didn't realize how foggy things had looked, because now everything is so clear and bright."

Vrabc, an ophthalmologist, is the first eye surgeon in the region to offer a new, artificial lens for cataract patients who have a pre-existing corneal astigmatism. Astigmatism is an unequal curvature of the cornea. Vrabc has been trained and certified to implant the Alcon AcrySof Toric Intraocular Lens, which was approved by the FDA last year. The Toric lens is the latest in Alcon's lenses that not only corrects cloudy vision caused by cataracts in patients with astig-



Dr. Michael Vrabc

matism, but also offers improved intermediate and distance vision, often eliminating the need for glasses entirely. Some patients, however, may still need to wear reading glasses.

Cataract surgery involves removing the natural lens of the eye and typically replacing it with an artificial lens. A clinical study of the Toric lens found that it eliminated the need for glasses in 97 percent of patients who wore corrective lenses for distance vision.

"The implant's power and shape is tailored to meet each patient's individual needs," said Vrabc. "More and more patients who come to see us for cataract

surgery want to see better without glasses. Now with one operation, we can correct several refractive problems."

McPeak, who now sees close to 20/20, says she's amazed at how clearly she can see sheet music when she's giving piano lessons, as well as the blackboard in her classroom.

"This was a 12-minute procedure for a lifetime of vision," she said. "The nice thing is that once you have cataracts removed, they will never come back again."

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BY WENDY HARRIS
POST-CRESCENT STAFF WRITER

They're collecting data on what's making your eyes so dry

Many factors such as allergies, hormones and sunlight conspire to aggravate dry eyes.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency each year help compile a list of cities prone to dry eyes based on wind, temperature, hu-

midity, pollution, altitude and allergy irritants.

You may also suffer from dry eyes if you work at a computer, exercise outside on a windy day, read, travel in a car with the air conditioner on or watch an outdoor football or baseball game, especially at night. This informa-

tion comes from the National Women's Health Resource Center, an independent nonprofit health information source.

The center is focusing its attention on dry-eye issues because dry eye affects many more women than men, said Elizabeth Battaglini Cahill, execu-

utive director of the center.

If you want to know more about dry eyes, the research and more, visit the center at www.healthywomen.org or the National Eye Institute at www.nei.nih.gov.

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