

Have your eyes checked on a regular basis

Regular vision and eye examinations are important to your eyes as well as your overall health

One of the best things you can do for your eyes is to have them checked on a regular basis. Eye care professionals can help detect vision disorders as well as many serious medical conditions. Just like other health issues, early detection of eye problems can help catch minor problems before they turn major.

Some Facts About Common Vision Problems

■ Refractive Errors

So what causes many common vision problems? Refractive errors. In simple terms, the shape of your eye affects how the light enters your eye. Someone with perfect 20/20 vision has eyes that are round like a ball. Someone who needs corrective lenses to see usually has eyes that are shaped differently. Fortunately, almost all refractive errors can be corrected with eyeglasses or contact lenses to provide sharper vision. Different types of errors include:

- **Myopia** (nearsightedness) The eye is longer than normal, causing objects in the distance to appear blurred.
- **Hyperopia** (farsightedness) The eye is shorter than normal, resulting in seeing close objects blurry.
- **Astigmatism** The eye is not perfectly round, so images near and far appear blurred.
- **Presbyopia** The lens inside your eye loses its elasticity, making it more difficult to read smaller print. This usually occurs with age.

■ Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetes can weaken or cause changes to the blood vessels in the retina. If you have diabetes, it is important that you received a yearly routine eye exam. Retinopathy may signal the onset of diabetes years before a regular diagnosis can be made.

■ Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration is a disease in which the macula located in the center of the retina, gradually deteriorates, leading to decreased vision or blindness. This condition affects the central vision-critical for reading, driving, recognizing people's faces and doing detail work. It does not impact peripheral vision. It is primarily caused by aging, but other causes including smoking, hereditary factors, obesity and inactivity. If you notice a change in your eyesight, make an appointment to see an eye care professional.

■ Glaucoma

The disease causes damage to the optic nerve, because of increased pressure within the eye. If left untreated, glaucoma will lead to vision loss. Treatments to slow the progression of glaucoma are available; however, at least half of those with glaucoma are not receiving treatment because they don't know they have it. Visit an eye doctor soon to help keep your vision healthy and strong.

■ Cataracts

A Cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens. The most common type is related to aging. Stronger lighting and eye glasses may lessen vision problems caused by early-stage cataracts. At a certain point, however, surgery may be needed to improve vision. If you're experiencing cloudy vision, an eye care professional may be able to provide relief.



Quick Tips to Help Keep Your Vision Strong and Lasting

- Wear sunglasses outdoors
- If you notice any changes in vision, including blurriness, dimness, blind spots, or halos around lights, have an eye exam.
- Maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol.
- If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar at a healthy level.
- Eat foods that have plenty of antioxidants, such as leafy greens and vegetables.
- If you use the computer for long periods of time, take frequent short breaks.
- Wear proper eye protection while playing sports
- Avoid cigarette smoking

Many causes of blindness are preventable through regular eye exams and treatment. Don't let this happen to you. Visit your eye care doctor regularly for exams and professional advice. A sharp and keen vision helps your vision as well as your overall health.



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