



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:**¹

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:**¹

Diabetes can weaken or cause changes to the blood vessels in the retina. If you have diabetes, it is important that you receive routine eye exams as frequently as your physician or eye health care professional recommends. Retinopathy may signal the onset of diabetes years before a regular diagnosis can be made.

• **Macular degeneration:**¹

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 damage to the light-detecting nerve cells in the macula. The cause of this damage to the nerve cells is unknown. A person's genes and family history may play a role. If you notice a change in your eyesight, make an appointment to see an eye care professional.

• **Glaucoma:**¹

Glaucoma is the name for a group of eye diseases that damages the optic nerve. This nerve carries information from the eye to the brain. When the nerve is damaged, you can lose your vision. If left untreated, glaucoma may lead to vision loss. Treatments to slow the progression of glaucoma are available; visit an eye care professional soon to help keep your vision healthy and strong.

• **Cataracts:**¹

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:¹

- Provide good light for reading, work, or study (soft background light plus a light on your task).
- Take regular breaks from close work and visually demanding tasks. Blink often, and close and rest your eyes when they feel tired or dry.
- Avoid glare on TV and computer screens. Place your TV or computer screen where lights do not reflect on the screen. Some people find it easier to work on a computer in a dimly lit room. And some people use special non-glare screens that fit over the computer screen.
- Wear proper eye safety equipment for hazardous tasks. Wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect your eyes from excessive ultraviolet light from the sun. Too much UV exposure can damage your retina and cause lasting vision loss. It can also raise the risk of cataracts.
- Avoid smoke and other things that irritate your eyes.
- Schedule routine eye exams with an eye care professional.

Many causes of blindness are prevent-able 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.

1. Healthwise, Learning Center, Eyes and Vision, updated March 12, 2014 <https://www.healthwise.net/intracorp/Content/StdDocument.aspx?DOCHWID=center1014>

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