

Aging Well Quarterly

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Why Have a Vision Exam?

Problems with vision that are left undetected and untreated may lead to vision loss and in some cases blindness. Early recognition is the key to minimizing vision loss.

If you have a family history or any risk factors for eye disease you may want to visit your doctor more than recommended.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends the following general vision screening guidelines for healthy adults with no risk factors for eye disease:

At least one eye exam between the ages of 20 and 29

At least two eye exams between the ages of 30 and 39

An eye exam every 2 to 4 years between the ages of 40-64

Age 65 and older an eye exam every 1 to 2 years

Vision Loss

As our population ages and life expectancies increase, we can expect growing numbers of senior citizens in good health to face limitations related to age. One limitation may include some degree of vision loss. 6.5 million Americans age 55 and older will be affected with age related vision loss and blindness.

Most people experience changes in vision as they grow older. The most common types of changes associated with aging are easily corrected with glasses for either close work such as reading, or seeing at a distance.

Seniors who have developed vision problems later in life may need to learn how to find new ways of accomplishing routine tasks. These skills will enable the senior to live safely and maintain their independent lifestyle.

Changes in vision should be evaluated by a medical professional as these changes may denote an eye disease, eye injury, or a medical condition like diabetes. Vision changes should not be ignored. Professional help may be necessary. The following descriptions of professionals working in the field of vision may assist in deciding with whom to schedule an appointment.

? Opticians dispenses glasses.

? Optometrists perform eye exams and may diagnose eye problems. They prescribe glasses and contact lenses.

? Ophthalmologists are physicians who diagnose and treat diseases that affect the eyes. These doctors may also provide routine vision care services, such as prescribing glasses and contact lenses.

? Low Vision Specialists are licensed doctors of optometry who are trained in examining people with vision impairments. Low Vision Specialists assist people in learning how to use their remaining vision to its fullest.

Making the Most of Your Vision



Have floor and table lamps in rooms to improve lighting.

Replace burned out light bulbs.

Use tactile clues such as materials with texture to provide identification.

Secure cords to prevent tripping.

Keep table and desk chairs pushed in.

Move objects in the home out of the main flow of travel.

Increase contrast by using dark ink on white paper or light color ink on dark paper when writing.

Put dark objects on a light color background, light color objects on a dark background..

Many books are now in large print or on tape if reading print is difficult.

Use hand-held or stand-type magnifiers to help with reading.

Minimize clutter.

Mark medication containers with high contrast markers.

Use telescope aides to help see distant objects.

Wear tinted eyeglasses to reduce glare.

Call the bank and utility carriers and ask for statements to be produced in large print.

The Seniors EyeCare Program (SEP) helps to ensure that all eligible seniors have access to medical eye care and promotes annual, dilated eye exams. People eligible for a referral through the program receive a comprehensive, medical eye exam and up to one year of treatment—**at no out-of-pocket cost**—for any disease diagnosed during the initial exam. Volunteer ophthalmologists accept Medicare and/or other insurance reimbursement as payment in full.

The Seniors EyeCare Program is designed for people who:

? Are US citizens or legal residents

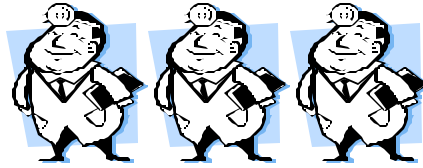
? Are age 65 and older

? Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years

? Do not belong to an HMO or the VA

To determine if you, a family member or friend qualify for a SEP referral,

call 800.222.EYES (3937) toll-free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.



Common Age-Related Eye Conditions

Macular Degeneration

is a degenerative eye disease that causes progressive loss of central vision.

Drug therapy, laser surgery, or other medical treatment may slow down the progression.

Possible Symptoms:

Blurred, distorted, or a blind spot in the center of the visual field.

Difficulty seeing details up close and at a distance

Distortion of lines and shapes

Reduced recognition of color

Glaucoma

is the increase of pressure inside the eye

Medication, surgery, or a combination enables many people to control the pressure inside the eye.

Possible Symptoms:

Peripheral vision loss

Blurred vision

Blind spots

The eyeball hurts

Inability to adjust vision in dark rooms

Difficulty focusing on close up work

Vision fluctuates

Diabetic Retinopathy

caused by damage to the blood vessels of the retina of the eye

For people with Diabetes, control of blood sugar levels is advantageous in preventing this disease.

Laser treatment and surgery are treatment options.

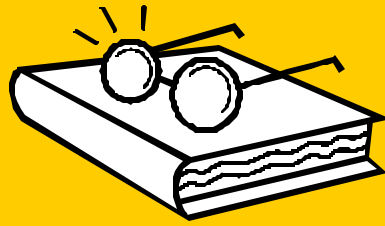
Possible Symptoms:

Blurred vision (which may be linked to blood sugar levels)

Floaters and flashes

Sudden loss of vision

Recognizing Vision Loss in Elders



- No longer reading the newspaper, books, magazines, or the mail
- **Not able to write on the line or sign a check**
- Starting to comment on lighting or lack of lighting in a room
- **Bumping into objects**
- More cautious than usual when going up and down stairs
- **Difficulty getting food onto a fork**
- Knocks things over when reaching out
- **Difficulty pouring liquids**
- Changes in the way activities such as reading, watching television, writing, cooking, and or cleaning are being done
- **Squinting or tilting head to see things more clearly**
- Difficulty recognizing familiar objects and faces
- **Hesitant when reaching out for objects**

For more information on planning elder Care, or for any other eldercare topic, please call CCRC to be connected with an eldercare specialist.



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