# Focus in On Eye Health

Did you know that your brain can detect 10 million different colors? Or that the six muscles in each of your eyes move faster than any other muscles in your body? Your eyes are completely unique to you as no two people share the exact same hue. This month, take some time to learn how to keep your eyes safe and your vision healthy.

Vision Changes as You Age

Some common changes that people notice as they age include having trouble seeing objects up close, not being able to tell certain colors, like blue and black, apart, and needing to take more time to adjust to changes in levels of light. These problems tend to be minor annoyances that can be easily resolved. You may need to turn on more lights in your home or get non-prescription reading glasses to help focus on objects that are close by. Low vision is another common problem that comes with age and cannot be permanently fixed, but can be managed with glasses, contact lenses, or certain therapies. Those with low vision have trouble recognizing the faces of family and friends. They also may have trouble doing everyday tasks like reading, cooking, or reading street signs. In addition to low vision, there are other diseases and conditions that you could develop with age.
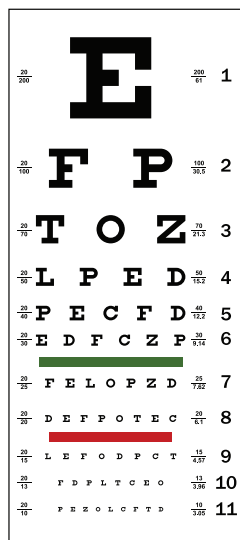
Look Out for These Eye Diseases and Conditions

These diseases and conditions can lead to vision loss and blindness and may have few or no symptoms:

- Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) can make objects appear less clear.
- Diabetic retinopathy may occur when a diabetic's blood sugar isn't well controlled.
- Cataracts can show up as cloudy spots in your vision that cause blurry and hazy sight.
- Glaucoma is typically caused by fluid buildup in the eye and could lead to vision loss and blindness. Those with glaucoma usually have no early symptoms or pain.
- Dry eye could feel like stinging or burning in the eye and is a result of tear glands not working well.

If you suddenly cannot see, or experience blurry vision, double vision, eye pain, redness or swelling in your eye/eyelid, or are seeing many new floaters (specks that float along your vision), you may be experiencing an eye emergency. Talk to your eye doctor as soon as possible.

Treat Your Eyes to Better Health

Since many eye diseases and conditions begin with few noticeable symptoms, regular dilated eye exams are recommended to prevent complications and vision loss. The National Eye Institute recommends that everyone over the age of 50 should have a dilated eye exam once each year. There are additional ways that you can prevent eye diseases from occurring or worsening:

- For AMD, dietary supplements can prevent the condition from getting worse.
- Diabetic retinopathy can be slowed by controlling your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels.
- Cataract surgery is a common treatment that can restore vision.
- Prescription eye drops, lasers, or surgery can help treat glaucoma.

Prevention is the Key

Taking steps to keep your eyes healthy starts with a few simple lifestyle changes. Tend to your overall health by eating foods that are good for your eyes, including dark,

leafy greens (spinach, kale, and collard greens) and fish that are high in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, tuna, and halibut). Improve your health and lower your risk of worsening health and eye conditions by increasing physical activity. This will help lower your blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels. Quit smoking to lessen the likelihood of developing diseases like macular degeneration and cataracts. Lastly, protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses when you're outdoors and using protective eyewear when doing potentially dangerous activities (home repairs, yard work, etc.).

Sources

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