

# Healthy Eyes

When you take good care of your eyes, you take good care of yourself.



## Eye examinations have detected the following conditions:

- Cataracts
- Crohn's disease
- Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Graves' disease
- Herpes zoster
- High cholesterol
- Hypertension
- Hypertensive Retinopathy
- Lupus
- Lyme disease
- Macular Degeneration
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Sarcoidosis
- Sickle cell anemia
- Tumors
- Vascular disease

A health coach can help you meet your healthy lifestyle goals

Call a TML IEBP Professional Health Coach at 1-888-818-2822

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

National Eye Institute  
[www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)

U.S. National Library of Medicine  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)

## What is a comprehensive dilated eye exam?

A comprehensive dilated eye exam is a painless procedure in which an eye care professional examines your eyes to look for common vision problems and eye diseases, many of which have no early warning signs. Regular comprehensive eye exams can help you protect your sight, can help detect age related diseases in early stages and make sure that you are seeing your best.

**Everyone age 50 or older should have an annual comprehensive dilated eye exam.**

A comprehensive eye examination includes:

- **Dilation.** Drops are placed in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupils. Your eye care professional uses a special magnifying lens to examine your retina to look for signs of damage and other eye problems, such as diabetic retinopathy or age-related macular degeneration. A dilated eye exam also allows your doctor to check for damage to the optic nerve that occurs when a person has glaucoma. After the examination, your close-up vision may remain blurred for several hours.
- **Tonometry.** This test helps to detect glaucoma by measuring eye pressure. Your eye care professional may direct a quick puff of air onto the eye, or gently apply a pressure-sensitive tip near or against the eye. Numbing drops may be applied to your eye for this test. Elevated pressure is a possible sign of glaucoma.
- **Visual Field Test.** This test measures your side (peripheral) vision. It helps your eye care professional find out if you have lost side vision, a sign of glaucoma.
- **Visual Acuity Test.** This eye chart test measures how well you see at various distances.

## Eye Health Tips

- **Know your family's eye health history.** It's important to know if anyone has been diagnosed with a disease or condition since many are hereditary.
  - **Eat right to protect your sight.** Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, particularly dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens is important for keeping your eyes healthy. Research has also shown there are eye health benefits from eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, and halibut.
  - **Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing diabetes and other systemic conditions. This can lead to vision loss, such as diabetic eye disease or glaucoma.
- **Wear protective eyewear.** Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home. Protective eyewear includes safety glasses and goggles, safety shields, and eye guards specially designed to provide the correct protection for a certain activity. Most protective eyewear lenses are made of polycarbonate, which is 10 times stronger than other plastics.
  - **Quit smoking or never start.** Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body. Research has linked smoking to an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, and optic nerve damage, all of which can lead to blindness.
  - **Be cool and wear your shades.** Sunglasses are a great fashion accessory, but their most important job is to protect your eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays.
    - Ultraviolet radiation can cause short and long term eye problems such as photokeratitis, snow blindness, cataracts, pterygium and various forms of eye cancer.
    - When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation with wavelengths up to 400nm. Sunglasses that meet this standard are labeled "UV400".
    - High-energy visible light (HEV) has been implicated with age-related macular degeneration.
    - It is important for children to wear sunglasses as their ocular lenses are thought to transmit more HEV light than adults.
    - Lenses should fit close to the face and allow very little stray light.
  - **Give your eyes a rest.** If you spend a lot of time at the computer or focusing on any one thing, you sometimes forget to blink and your eyes can get fatigued. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This can help reduce eyestrain.
  - **Clean your hands and your contact lenses properly.** To avoid the risk of infection, always wash your hands thoroughly before putting in or taking out your contact lenses. Make sure to disinfect contact lenses as instructed and replace them as appropriate.
  - **Practice workplace eye safety.** When protective eyewear is required as a part of your job, make a habit of wearing the appropriate type at all times and encourage your coworkers to do the same.

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## Risk Factors for Eye Disease

- Over age 50
- Family history
- Gender and race can be risk factors for certain eye conditions
- Medical conditions (diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, high cholesterol)
- Lifestyle choices (smoking, excessive alcohol intake, prolonged exposure to sun)

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What is my diagnosis?
- What caused my condition?
- Can my condition be treated? What are the benefits/risks/side effects associated with this treatment?
- How will this condition affect my vision now and in the future?
- Should I watch for any particular symptoms and notify you if they occur?
- Should I make any lifestyle changes (quit smoking, lose weight, eat healthy)?
- How frequently should I have my eyes examined?
- Are there foods, drugs, or activities I should avoid?
- If my treatment includes taking a medication, what should I do if I miss a dose?
- Are other treatments available?

## About My Tests?

- What kind of tests will I have?
- Do these tests have any side effects or risks?
- Will I need more tests later?
- What do you expect to find out from these tests?
- When will I know the results?

## Common Eye Conditions

### Retinopathy

Retinopathy is a condition that causes blood vessels of the retina to swell and leak fluid. The retina is the layer of tissue at the back part of the eye. It changes light and images that enter the eye into nerve signals that are sent to the brain. There are two types of retinopathy: diabetic retinopathy and hypertensive retinopathy.

### Diabetic retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of blindness in American adults and the most common diabetic eye disease, affecting an estimated 4.1 million adults over the age of 40 in the United States.

- All people with diabetes, both type 1 and type 2, are at risk.
- Everyone with diabetes should get a comprehensive dilated eye exam at least once a year.
- The longer someone has diabetes, the more likely he or she will get diabetic retinopathy.
- 40-45% of Americans diagnosed with diabetes have some stage of diabetic retinopathy. If you have diabetic retinopathy, your doctor can recommend treatment to help prevent its progression.
- During pregnancy, diabetic retinopathy may be a problem for women with diabetes. To protect vision, every pregnant woman with diabetes should have a comprehensive dilated eye exam as soon as possible. Your doctor may recommend additional exams during your pregnancy.

### Hypertensive retinopathy

Hypertensive retinopathy is damage to the retina from high blood pressure. The higher the blood pressure and the longer it has been high, the more severe the damage is likely to be.

### Age-related Macular Degeneration

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) blurs the sharp, central vision needed for activities such as reading, sewing and driving. It is a painless disease that destroys the macula, the part of the eye that helps you see fine detail. AMD does not cause pain.

- AMD is the leading cause of vision loss in Americans aged 60 and older.
- AMD advances so slowly that people notice little change in vision.
- If AMD progresses, it may lead to loss of vision in both eyes.

### Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye that affects vision.

- Cataracts commonly decrease vision in older adults.
- By age 80, more than half of all Americans have had a cataract or cataract surgery.

### Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases that can damage the eye's optic nerve and result in vision loss and blindness. Glaucoma occurs when the normal fluid pressure inside the eye slowly rises, which can damage the optic nerve and decrease vision.

- Glaucoma affects 2.2 million Americans.
- A comprehensive dilated eye exam can diagnose glaucoma.
- Sometimes eye drops are prescribed to reduce the risk of developing glaucoma.

Risk factors for Glaucoma include:

- African Americans over age 40
- Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans
- People with family history of glaucoma

### Dry Eye

Dry Eye occurs when the eye does not produce tears properly or when the tears evaporate too quickly. If left untreated, this condition can lead to pain, ulcers, or scars on the cornea and some loss of vision.

- Women after menopause are at higher risk
- More common with use of certain medications
- Older adults frequently experience dryness of the eyes

### Low Vision

Low Vision is a visual impairment that is not corrected by standard eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery and that interferes with the ability to perform everyday activities.

*Disclaimer: This material is for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional medical advice. Always consult your physician before beginning a new treatment, diet or fitness program. This information should not be considered complete, nor should it be relied on in diagnosing or treating a medical condition.*