



# Vision & Aging

## Taking Care of Your Eyes

### A Glance At Normal Changes To Vision As We Age...

- **Losing focus** – the eye's lens loses elasticity making it difficult to focus on objects up close
- **Declining Sensitivity** – the eye's lens becomes more dense and yellow affecting our ability to distinguish colors
- **Needing more light** – the eye's pupil gets smaller resulting in a need for more light to see well
- **Dry eyes** – reduced tear production

### SEEING THE BIG PICTURE...

Age causes changes to vision including changes to the lens and pupil, which affects image quality and the amount of light that enters the eye.

Decreased visual input can cause difficulty with walking and balance, leading to an increased risk for falls.

Altered color perception may make it difficult to see objects in your path, leading to a risk of tripping or falling.

Many older adults report some difficulty with daily activities due to visual impairments—vision loss could mean loss of independence.

### Tips for Healthy Vision

- Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look away 20 ft. in front of you for 20 seconds to reduce eye strain.
- Wear sunglasses on sunny days to protect your eyes from the sun's UV rays
- Exercise, maintain a healthy weight, don't smoke
- Keep your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugars under control
- Schedule routine eye examinations every 1-2 years. Everyone over age 50 should get a comprehensive dilated eye exam
- Eat right to protect your sight--Foods rich in antioxidants, such as leafy green vegetables, fruits, and nuts

### Opti-Who?

Eye Professionals Explained...

**Opticians** provide eyeglasses or contact lenses. They do not examine eyes.

**Optometrists** examine and diagnose eye problems. They write prescriptions for glasses and contact lenses.

**Ophthalmologists** diagnose and treat eye diseases. They perform eye surgeries on problems such as cataracts and glaucoma.

# Age-Related Eye Diseases & Conditions



**Normal Vision**



**Diabetic Retinopathy** – damage to the blood vessels in the retina, which can lead to vision loss and blindness  
-No early warning signs or symptoms  
-People with diabetes should get a dilated eye exam once a year



**Glaucoma** – group of eye diseases caused by a build up of fluid in the eye that can damage the optic nerve  
-Loss of side vision  
-African Americans, those with diabetes, or over 40 at higher risk



**Age-Related Macular Degeneration** - gradual damage to the macula of the eye which is needed for sharp, detailed central vision  
-Loss of central vision, Blurred vision



**Cataract** – clouding of the eye's lens  
-Cloudy, blurred vision  
-Colors may not appear as bright  
-Diabetes, smoking, and exposure to sunlight increase risk

## LOW VISION

### What is it?

Difficulty seeing during everyday activities even with the use of eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication or surgery

### What Can You Use To Help?

- Large-print books, magazines, and newspapers
- Books-on-tape
- Talking wristwatches
- Self-threading needles
- Better lighting
- Hand-held or spectacle-mounted telescopes or magnifiers

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### Vision Changes that Require Emergency Attention:

- Temporary or permanent double vision
- Appearance of a 'curtain' across your field of vision
- Blind spots, 'floaters', or sensation of flashing lights
- A red, painful eye – could indicate infection
- Partial or complete blindness in one or both eyes

**Don't be blind to warning signs!**

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003029.htm>  
[http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/vision/hic\\_vision\\_problems\\_in\\_aging\\_adults.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/vision/hic_vision_problems_in_aging_adults.aspx)  
<http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/visionandaging/module2.asp>  
[www.environmentalgeriatrics.org](http://www.environmentalgeriatrics.org)