Vision Health

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Vision Health is part of your overall health – regular visual health exams are just as important as regular physical exams, dental exams, etc. Eye exams at every age, starting in early childhood, can help keep your vision strong.

Many people think their eyesight is “just fine”, but then they get that first pair of glasses or contact lenses they realize what they have been missing!

Improving your eyesight is important—approximately 11 million Americans over age 12 need vision correction. Additionally, eye exams can and do identify eye diseases early so that they can be treated and vision can be preserved.

During an eye exam, visual acuity (sharpness), depth perception, eye alignment, and eye movement are tested. Eye drops are used to make your pupils larger so your eye doctor can see inside your eyes and check for signs of health problems. Your eye doctor may even spot other conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

Early treatment is vital in preventing many common eye diseases which cause permanent vision loss or blindness:

- Diabetic Retinopathy: causes damage to blood vessels in the back of the eye
- Cataracts: clouding of the lens of the eye
- Glaucoma: a group of diseases that damages the optic nerve
- Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD): the gradual breakdown of light-sensitive tissue in the eye

Of the estimated 61 million US adults at high risk for vision loss, only half visited an eye doctor in the past 12 months. Regular eye care can have a life-changing impact on preserving the vision of millions of people

**Suggested Frequency of Eye Exams:**

**Children:**
- At least once between the ages of 3 to 5
- School-aged children should have an eye exam at least every two years if no vision correction is required. Children who need eyeglasses or contact lenses should be examined annually or as recommended by their eye doctor.

**Adults:**
- Under the age of 60 with no known medical or eye disease, every one to 2 years
- Over the age of 60 annual exams, or as instructed by your health care professional.

**Other considerations:**
- Individuals with diabetes should have a dilated eye exam every year.
- Some people are at higher risk for glaucoma and should have a dilated eye exam every 2 years:
  - African Americans 40 years and older
Important:

If you have any of the following eye problems, don’t wait for your next appointment—visit your eye doctor as soon as possible:

- Decreased vision
- Draining or redness of the eye(s)
- Eye pain
- Double vision
- Floaters (tiny specks that appear to float before your eyes) and/or flashes of light
- Circles (halos) around lights

Tips for Healthy Eyes

- Maintain your health—“keep your numbers in check” like blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar etc. Eat a healthy diet and maintain an appropriate weight for your height. Sleep well. Overall good health will help you maintain good eye health.
- See your eye doctor for regular exams, including dilation of your eyes. Many common eye diseases such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease and age-related macular degeneration often have no warning signs. An eye exam is the only way to detect these diseases in their early stages.
- Know your family’s eye health history; this can help you and your health care provider know if you are at higher risk of eye issues.
- Quit smoking. Smoking is as bad for your eyes as it is for the rest of your body.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from the sun’s ultraviolet rays. When purchasing sunglasses, look for ones that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation.
- When playing sports or engaging in other potentially dangerous activities wear protective eyewear such as safety glasses or goggles to protect your eyes.
- Wash your hands - keeping your hands clean is important when it comes to your eyes, especially if you’re a contact lens wearer. Some germs and bacteria that come from your hands can cause eye infections.
- Digital devices and Blue Light - Here are some other tips to help your eyes, if you have a lot of daily “screen time”:
  - Keep your computer screen within 20”-24” of your eyes.
  - Keep the top of your computer screen slightly below eye level.
  - Adjust the lighting in the room to minimize glare on the screen.
  - Blink frequently.
  - Take a break every 20 minutes to focus on an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Websites: