



Everyone's Vision Can Change With Age

As you age, it is normal to notice changes in your vision. Vision changes can make it difficult to perform everyday activities, such as reading, walking safely, taking medications, performing self-care and household tasks, and driving.

Some changes are normal. These changes include the following:

- Losing focus, making it harder to focus vision up close.
- Having trouble distinguishing colors, such as blue from black, or where an object ends and its background begins.
- Needing more light to see well and more time to adjust to changing levels of light (e.g., going from a room that is dark to one that is brightly lit).

These changes do not have to stop you from enjoying an active lifestyle or maintaining your independence.

These vision changes can often be corrected with the following:

- Glasses
- Contact lenses
- Improved lighting

Vision loss is not a normal part of aging. But, as you get older, you are at higher risk of developing the following age-related eye diseases and conditions that can lead to vision loss or blindness:

- Age-related macular degeneration
- Cataract
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Glaucoma

In their early stages, these diseases often have no warning signs or symptoms. The only way to detect them before they cause vision loss or blindness is through a comprehensive dilated eye exam. During a comprehensive dilated eye exam, your eye care professional will put drops in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupils. He or she will use a special magnifying lens to examine your eyes to look for signs of eye disease. A comprehensive dilated eye exam is not the same exam you have for glasses or contact lenses. But this exam can also help detect other vision problems, such as presbyopia (you lose the ability to focus up close, but your ability to focus on objects that are far away remains normal), nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism.

There Are Other Things You Can Do To Protect Your Vision

- Stop smoking.
- Eat a diet rich in green, leafy vegetables and fish.

- Exercise.
- Maintain normal blood pressure.
- Control diabetes (if you have it).
- Wear sunglasses and a brimmed hat any time you are outside in bright sunshine.
- Wear protective eyewear when working around your house or playing sports.

Be Prepared When You Visit Your Eye Care Professional

Have a list of all your questions and concerns ready when you visit your eye care professional. Also, be sure to tell him or her about all the medications you are taking. Some may have side effects that can affect vision.

Here are some good questions to ask:

- Am I at higher risk for eye disease?
- What changes can I expect in my vision?



Protect Your Vision.

- Will the changes in my vision get worse?
- Can the changes in my vision be corrected? How?
- What can I do to protect or prolong my vision?
- Will diet, exercise, or other lifestyle changes help?
- How often should I have an eye exam?

Where To Get More Information

For more information, visit the National Eye Institute Healthy Eyes Webpage:
www.nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes

Everyone over age 50 should have a comprehensive dilated eye examination. It is one of the best things you can do to protect your sight.

Even if you are not experiencing vision problems, it is still important to have a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Early detection and treatment can help save your sight.

