

WELLNESSMONTHLY

Eyes are Window to Your Health Status | March 2020



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Eyes are Window to Your Health Status

*In recognition of **Workplace Eye Wellness Month** and the **Year of the Eye Exam**, this edition of **Wellness Monthly** focuses on the importance of eye care.*

Wearing safety goggles or glasses whenever hazards are present significantly reduces injury risk. It's also important to take good care of your eyes in other ways.

Gazing Inward

Thinking you don't need an eye exam because your vision is good is a common misconception. An annual exam is recommended to evaluate your vision and overall health.

The eye is the only organ that provides an unobstructed view of blood vessels, nerves and connecting tissue without surgery. Early recognition and treatment of disease helps reduce the likelihood of permanent vision loss and facilitates early treatment of previously undetected medical conditions.

For example, glaucoma and diabetic eye disease are evident during an eye exam but usually have no obvious symptoms during early stages when treatment could be started. A cataract, which clouds the clear lens of your eye, may gradually become visible over time. High blood pressure, often referred to as a "silent killer," is observed using an instrument that projects light to reveal blood vessels in the retina, the back of your eye where images focus.

Many people wear corrective lenses for a refractive error, which occurs when the eye cannot properly focus light on the retina. Refractive errors include:

- **Nearsightedness or myopia** – better sight up close than at a distance
- **Farsightedness or hyperopia** – better sight at a distance than up close
- **Astigmatism** – slightly misshapen cornea
- **Presbyopia** – decreased lens elasticity due to aging

Other conditions that may affect vision quality and your safety include:

- **Macular degeneration** – age-related central vision loss
- **Color vision deficiency (color blindness)** – difficulty seeing certain colors
- **Strabismus** – misaligned eyes, which can affect depth perception
- **Dry eye** – unable to produce a protective tear film when blinking

What Can You Do?

To preserve your vision and your health:

1. Wear protective eyewear when there is risk of exposure to flying objects, dust particles, splashes, sparks and other hazards. Ensure that your vision is not impaired by personal protective equipment and you can safely wear corrective lenses, as needed.
2. Get an annual eye exam to determine whether you need a new or updated prescription for glasses or contact lenses, check for eye disease and evaluate your overall health.
3. People with vision problems often have related symptoms of depression or anxiety. If vision problems affect your ability to function physically or mentally, consult a medical or mental health professional.
4. Follow these tips:
 - Do not press or rub an eye that may be injured
 - Take a 20-second break to view something 20 feet away every 20 minutes
 - Wear sunscreen and sunglasses with UV protection
 - Reduce computer monitor, light, window and other types of glare
 - Eat nutritious foods, sleep well, exercise regularly, drink water and avoid smoking

Some of these are signs of a detached retina, which can cause permanent vision loss if not treated. Nausea or headache with eye pain symptom of glaucoma, a disease that damages the optic nerve, or a stroke.

An eye exam is urgently needed for changes such as:

- Unusual trouble adjusting to dark rooms
- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Heightened sensitivity to light or glare
- Change in color of the iris
- Red-rimmed, encrusted or swollen lids
- Recurrent pain in or around eyes
- Dark spot at the center of viewing
- Lines and edges appear distorted or wavy
- Excess tearing or watery eyes
- Dry eyes with itching or burning
- Seeing ghost-like images or spider webs

It's common to see some "floaters," but a significant amount may be a warning sign.

There is also a difference between age-related changes and eye disease. As you age, you may notice difficulty seeing small print or objects up close, a decline in your night vision or dry eyes as lubrication decreases. Getting an annual checkup will help you distinguish between normal changes and the presence of disease.



Emergency and Immediate Care

Never delay care when you have an eye problem. Get emergency medical assistance if you experience:

- Sudden loss of vision in one eye
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision
- Hazy or blurred vision
- A scratch, cut or embedded foreign body
- Flashes of light or black spots
- A chemical splash in the eye
- Halos or rainbows around light
- Uncontrollable bleeding
- Curtain-like blotting out of vision