

## Aging Eye

Which of your 5 senses are you most afraid of losing? If you are like most people, it's probably your ability to see. Despite this, many people are not conscientious about caring for their eyes and often neglect routine eye exam visits after the age of 40. If you have noticed that you have to hold the newspaper farther away from your eyes than you used to, join the crowd. Starting around age 40 the lens loses flexibility and eventually most people need reading glasses or bifocals to see up close. Age can bring on many changes that affect your eyesight. Some changes are more serious than others. The key is to have regular eye exams so you can spot problems early.

The fact is that the leading causes of visual impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age related eye diseases. Cataracts, glaucoma, age related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, dry eyes, drooping eyelids are just some of the more common causes of vision loss that are most commonly seen in the aging eye.

As Americans are living longer, healthier and more active lives, maintaining good vision in later years is becoming increasingly important. Since our vision is one of the primary ways that we interact with the world around us, loss of vision can be a significant disability. Inability to see well enough to pass the drivers license eye exam can mean a significant loss of independence and mobility. Vision loss to the point where you cannot read or watch television can have a significant effect on our quality of life in later years and contribute to other problems such as depression.

Growing older does not always mean seeing poorly. Many people have good eyesight well into their 80's and 90's. While older people are at much higher risk for more vision problems and eye diseases than younger people, much of the vision loss these diseases cause can be corrected or prevented with early detection and treatment. Over the age of 40 it is recommended that you have a complete eye exam with a eye care specialist (Ophthalmologist or Optometrist) every 1-2 years. During this exam the eye specialist should put drops in your eyes that widen (dilate) your pupils. This allows the examination of the inner parts of the eye where many eye diseases are detected. Over the age of 65 it is especially important to have yearly eye exams. If you have a history of diabetes or a family history of eye disease then routine eye exams are extremely important.



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