

Health Tips: Aging And Your Eyes

Steps to Protect Your Eyesight:

1. **People over age 65 should have yearly eye exams.** During this exam, the eye care professional should put drops in your eyes that will widen (dilate) your pupils so that he or she can look at your inner eye. If you wear glasses, your prescription should be checked too. See your doctor regularly to check for diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. These diseases can cause eye problems if not treated.
2. Protect your eyes from too much sunlight:
 - Wear sunglasses that block ultraviolet (UV) radiation
 - Wear a hat with a wide brim when you are outside.
3. See an eye care professional right away if you:
 - Suddenly cannot see or everything looks dim
 - See flashes of light
 - Have eye pain
 - Experience double vision
 - Have redness or swelling of your eye or eyelid

Common Eye Problems:

1. **Presbyopia** (prez-bee-OH-pee-uh) is a slow loss of ability to see close objects or small print. It is normal to have this as you get older. Reading glasses usually fix the problem.
2. **Floaters** are tiny specks or “cobwebs” that seem to float across your vision. Floaters can be a normal part of aging. But sometimes they are a sign of a more serious eye problem such as retinal detachment. If you see many new floaters and/or flashes of light, see your eye care professional right away. This is a medical emergency.

3. **Tearing** (or having too many tears) can come from being sensitive to light, wind, or temperature changes or having dry eyes. Wearing sunglasses may help, so might eye drops.

Eye Diseases And Disorders:

The following eye conditions can lead to vision loss and blindness. They may have few or no symptoms early on. Regular eye exams are your best protection. If your eye care professional finds a problem early, there are things you can do to keep your eyesight.

- **Cataracts** are cloudy areas in the eye's lens causing blurred or hazy vision.. Cataract surgery can restore good vision. It is a safe and common treatment. If you have a cataract, your eye care professional will watch for changes over time to see if you would benefit from surgery.
- **Glaucoma** comes from too much fluid pressure inside the eye. If not treated, it can lead to vision loss and blindness. People with glaucoma have no early symptoms or pain. You can protect yourself by having regular dilated eye exams. Glaucoma can be treated with prescription eye drops, lasers, or surgery.
- **Retinal disorders** are a leading cause of blindness in the United States. Retinal disorders that affect aging eyes include: **Age-related macular degeneration** and **Diabetic retinopathy**

Tricks That Can Help with Vision Problems:

- Write with bold, black felt-tip markers.
- Use paper with bold lines to help you write in a straight line.
- Put colored tape on the edge of your steps to help you see them and prevent you from falling.
- Install dark-colored light switches and electrical outlets that you can see easily against light-colored walls.
- Use motion lights that turn on by themselves when you enter a room. These may help you avoid accidents caused by poor lighting.
- Use telephones, clocks, and watches with large numbers; put large-print labels on the microwave and stove.
- Ask your eye doctor if your vision is okay for safe driving.

Kentucky AgrAbility 859-257-1845