

Healthy Vision: Take care of your eyes!



It's important to take care of your eyes. Poor vision makes it harder to read, drive, and cook. The good news: Many eye problems and diseases can be treated if caught early. To make sure you keep seeing clearly, get a comprehensive dilated eye exam. An eye care professional will examine your eyes for signs of vision problems or eye diseases. It's the best way to find out if you need glasses or contacts, or are in the early stages of a serious but treatable eye disease.

You should have a dilated eye exam regularly to check for common eye problems. If you haven't had an exam for some time, schedule one this month. CDC's Vision Health Initiative and the National Eye Institute are encouraging Americans to take care of their eyes to make sure they can see well throughout their lives.

Although older adults tend to have more vision problems, preschoolers may not see as well as they should. Just 1 out of every 7 preschoolers receives an eye exam, and fewer than 1 out of every 4 receives some type of vision screening. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends vision screening for all children ages 3 to 5 years to find conditions such as amblyopia, or lazy eye that can be treated effectively if caught early.

There are nine ways you can help protect your vision:

1. Get a dilated eye exam.

2. Know your family's eye health history.
3. Eat right to protect your sight—in particular, eat plenty of dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, or collard greens, and fish that is high in omega-3 fatty acids.
4. Maintain a healthy weight.
5. Wear protective eyewear when playing sports or doing activities around the home.
6. Quit smoking
7. Wear sunglasses that block 99 percent-100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.
8. Clean your hands and your contact lenses properly to avoid the risk of infection.
9. Practice workplace eye safety.

Taking care of your eyes also may benefit your overall health. People with vision problems are more likely than those with good vision to have diabetes, poor hearing, heart problems, high blood pressure, lower back pain and stroke, as well as have increased risk for falls, injury and depression. Among people age 65 and older, 54.2 percent of those who are blind and 41.7 percent of those with impaired vision say their overall health is fair or poor. Just 21.5 percent of older Americans without vision problems reported fair to poor health.

Visit an eye care professional if you have decreased vision; eye pain; drainage or redness of the eye; double vision; or diabetes; or if you see flashes of light, floaters (tiny specks that appear to float before your eyes), or circles (halos) around light sources.

CDC's Vision Health Initiative team works with partners to implement a public health framework that promotes vision health and quality of life for all populations, through all life stages, by preventing and controlling eye diseases, eye injury, and vision loss resulting in disability. The initiative is located in CDC's Division of Diabetes Translation.

For more information:

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