

Monthly Wellness SpotLight by PSA

IN GOOD HEALTH

YOUR EYES ARE IMPORTANT!

From the moment we wake up until the time we go to sleep, we use our eyes. Good vision and healthy eyes are crucial to your health and well-being. The more you know about eye health, the better equipped you are to identify problems early and seek treatment.

By middle age, many eye diseases begin; however, symptoms may not present until years later. Most don't realize they have a vision problem until they get a routine eye examination with dilation and vision screening.

In addition to age, other factors that increase your risk for eye disease include race and genetics. African Americans are at a higher risk for glaucoma as are those with a family history. Those with Diabetes are at an increased risk for Diabetic Retinopathy. The sooner these conditions are detected, the lower the risk for vision loss and blindness.

What Are the Symptoms of Eye Disease?

Symptoms of eye disease can overlap between multiple conditions. Watery eyes could be a result of conjunctivitis (pink eye), allergies, or a sty. Light sensitivity may be related to a cataract, a migraine, or a chalazion cyst. Usually resting your eyes solves the problem; however, if problems persist, it is a good idea to see an eye doctor. The most common symptoms of eye disease include:

- Blurred vision/vision Loss
- Water or yellow discharge
- Light flashes
- Pain/irritation
- Light sensitivity

What are the Most Common Eye Issues and Problems?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), about 21 million Americans will have some type of vision problems. Many of these conditions are not serious, but some can trigger permanent vision loss and even blindness.

More serious eye conditions include:

- Cataracts—The lens of the eye becomes cloudy which leads to blurred vision and eventually vision loss.
- Optic Neuritis—This is a condition causes your optic nerve (responsible for sending messages from your eyes to your brain) to be inflamed.
- Retinal Tear or Detachment—This is a medical emergency an occurs when the tissue at the back of the eye pulls away from the blood vessels that provide oxygen and nourishment for the eye.
- Macular Degeneration—The retina thins over time.
- Glaucoma—Pressure increases in the eye and damages the optic nerve. It is one of the leading causes of blindness in the U.S.
- Diabetic Retinopathy—High blood sugar levels in those with Diabetes causes damage to the blood vessels in the retina.

How Do I Protect My Vision?

- Get a Comprehensive Dilated Eye Exam! You could have a problem and not yet know it.
- Eat a healthy diet full of fruits, green vegetables, and fish. Also make sure you are consuming enough Vitamin A, Lutein, Zeaxanthin, Omega-3 Fatty Acids, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, and Zinc.
- Don't Smoke, and If You Do, Quit. Your health plan likely offers a smoking cessation program. Call their customer service line to inquire.
- Exercise—Being active reduces your risk for diabetes and cardiac disease, including high blood pressure. If you already have these conditions, exercise will help you to control them.
- ALWAYS Wear Sunglasses that block 99-100% of both UVA and UVB rays outside—even when it's cloudy.
- Wear Safety Glasses when your eyes are in danger.
- Rest Your Eyes from screens by taking a break every 20 minutes to look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Bottom Line: Make sure to get your annual eye exam with dilatation. This is the best way to detect problems before you have symptoms. Eat a healthy diet and protect your eyes. Your vision is your most important sense!