



Eye
Care

Warning Signs of Bad Vision

While regular trips to your eye doctor is a great way to stay on top of your vision, you should learn the signs that your eyes require attention.

Many issues can be quickly resolved with lenses, contacts or surgery. However, when severe symptoms set in, a physician may set appointments for numerous visits until the problem is remediated.

Check out these statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to determine the most common vision problems that impact Americans.

- More than 4.2 million citizens aged 40 years or older are either legally blind or are with low vision.

- The leading cause of blindness and low vision in the United States are primarily age-related diseases like macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

- Refractive errors such as myopia (nearsightedness) or hyperopia (farsightedness) are the country's most frequent eye problems.

The National Eye Institute suggests that proper refractive correction could improve vision among 150 million Americans. Discover how to recognize common illnesses related to your eyes so that



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you can seek professional help at the first sign of trouble.

HAZY VISION

Suppose you find it challenging to focus because your vision is blurry or hazy. In that case, you may be suffering from a cataract. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, this disease occurs when the eye's lens becomes cloudy or opaque. While most

are related to aging, people can develop them at any age. Examinations are crucial for early detection as a cataract typically form slowly and without pain. Resolution generally includes surgery to replace the cloudy lens with an artificial covering.

NIGHT BLINDNESS

According to the Cleveland Clinic, night blindness, or

nyctalopia, is defined as the inability to see well at night or in low light. While it's not technically a disease, it does usually develop due to an underlying condition. Issues like cataracts, vitamin A deficiency and retinitis pigmentosa are common causes of the problem. A physician can diagnose the ailment and decide the best route to take for remediation.

FLOATERS

The Mayo Clinic reports that eye floaters are spots in your vision that sometimes appear as black or grey specks, strings or cobwebs that arrive in your peripheral vision. Usually, they occur due to age-related changes as the vitreous inside your eyes becomes more liquefied. Small fibers will slowly begin to clump and cast tiny shadows on your retina.

Is Eye Health Genetic?

Did you know that eye diseases are related to genetic factors within the family?

According to the Cleveland Clinic, more than 60% of blindness cases among infants are caused by inherited visual illnesses. More than 40% of patients with forms of strabismus have a hereditary history of the disease.

If you're a parent who has vision problems, it is crucial to schedule your child for regular eye exams. Early detection helps experts diagnose the medical issue and develop a treatment plan that may lessen the symptoms. Learn more about common diseases that affect our vision that is primarily due to genetics.

STRABISMUS AND AMBLYOPIA

Strabismus, or more commonly known as crossed eyes, is most common in children and affects between 2-4% of America's population, according to the Boston Children's Hospital. A diagnosis of the condition can happen at birth or the issue can develop over time. In addition to a formation due to genetics, the problem may occur after an accident or other health problems.

A severe consequence of leaving strabismus untreated is the development of amblyopia, or lazy eye. The situation can be aggravated and leads to long-term damage

when vision doesn't normally form during childhood due to the eyes being unaligned.

MYOPIA AND HYPEROPIA

The organization Prevent Blindness says refractive errors occur if the eye cannot focus light correctly on the retina. Two of the most common types of these issues

include:

- **Myopia.** Also known as nearsightedness, the eyeball is too long for the eye's standard focusing power. It results in a blurry view of images that far away.

- **Hyperopia.** Commonly called farsightedness, the eyeball is too short to maximize focus, meaning distant items

are visible while viewing nearby images is challenging.

Corrective treatments for refractive errors usually include eyeglasses, contacts or surgery.

ASTIGMATISM

Another vision problem that is related to genetics is astigmatism. It develops

when the cornea of the eye has an irregular shape, often leading to blurry sight. Harvard Health states that other symptoms include double vision, headaches from eye strain and squinting. While the condition is not preventable, treatments like glasses or LASIK surgery can cure the issue.



Eye and Vision Myths

You have probably heard multiple facts about your eyes throughout your life.

Many popular theories have been disproven thanks to modern advances in the visual field.

Knowing the difference between fact and fiction can help you have healthier eyes while taking effective preventive measures to keep them that way. Take a look at these common misconceptions regarding vision, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

BABY'S EYE COLOR CANNOT BE PREDICTED

Your child's eye color is not decided by the shade of his parents' irises. Research shows that at least 16 genes play a role in developing a baby's eye tone. It's also a misconception that all infants are born with blue eyes. While their shades may appear lighter, it is caused because the cells are unable to develop melanin. Within about 12 months, the pigment production begins to grow, sometimes causing the iris to become darker.

EATING CARROTS WILL IMPROVE EYESIGHT

Once your vision has been compromised, no amount of fruits or vegetables will help



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restore the damage. However, a healthy diet is crucial when preventing eye problems. Try to fit in plenty of vitamin A into your eating habits. Foods to include are leafy greens, brightly colored vegetables and fish.

ONLY BOYS CAN BE COLORBLIND

While men are at a higher

risk for color blindness, women are also susceptible to the condition. Most people with the issue are born with partial or a total lack of cones in the retina, which is prominent when distinguishing different shades.

Another misunderstanding is that those who are color-blind only see in black and

white. Most see partial tones but find it challenging to distinguish between greens and reds. There are severe cases where some report only seeing various shades of gray.

WATCHING TV

You were probably told that watching television or sitting too close to the box would

inhibit your vision.

While it can cause headaches from eye strain, it's not been proven that it causes long-term damage.

However, if you notice a child prefers to sit nearby the tube, it may be an early sign of nearsightedness as they have trouble focusing on nearby objects.

Eye Health: Fast Facts

Vision loss or significant eye problems aren't always taken as seriously as diseases like cancer, heart problems or other ailments.

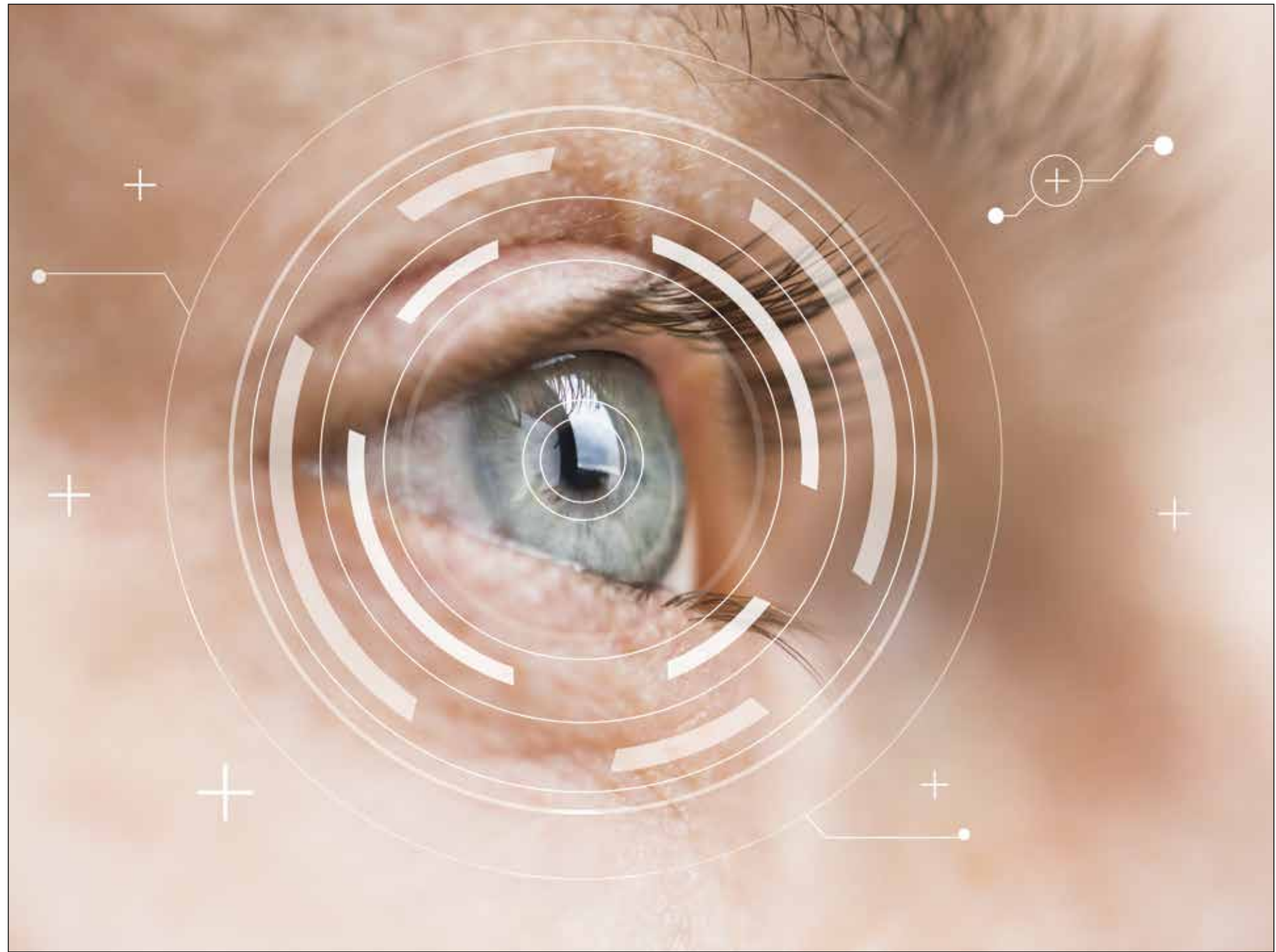
However, according to the American Foundation for the Blind, about 32.2 million adult Americans reported having trouble seeing in 2018. Vision impairments are not to be taken lightly.

You can increase your chances of early detection by understanding more about how illnesses affect our country.

These statistics from the American Academy of Ophthalmology will show you the urgency to seek help for vision problems and make regular trips to your eye doctor. The reason it's important to learn more about such statistics is to educate you for conversations with your eye doctor, but also to help you understand the severity of some of the most common eye issues facing Americans.

Read on and do your own research to learn more about how you can work on preventing some of these issues.

- 81% of Americans say they are knowledgeable about eye/vision health. Still, only one in five correctly identified the leading causes of blindness in the U.S. They are glaucoma,



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age-related macular degeneration and diabetic eye disease.

- 63% of adults are unaware that vision problems don't always cause symptoms before the disease impacts their eyesight.

- About two in three Americans falsely believe vision loss is inevitable with

age.

- Poor eyesight can lead to psychological problems such as isolation and depression.

- Diabetic retinopathy will affect about 13.2 million people by 2050, increasing from 7.7 million in 2010.

- In 2010, about 2.7 million people in the U.S. aged 40 and under had glaucoma. By

2050, the number is expected to increase to 5.5 million.

- About one-third of Americans develop some form of vision-reducing eye disease by age 65.

- Many forms of glaucoma have no warning signs. You can lose your vision before even realizing you're affected.

- Vision problems can

quickly aggravate because the brain adapts to the loss, making it more challenging to notice a decline.

- Nearly 90% of Americans with age-related macular degeneration are white.

- African Americans are six to eight times more likely to get glaucoma and go blind from it than white Americans.

Avoid Infections from Contacts

Contacts are an excellent alternative to surgeries that correct vision conditions.

Unfortunately, practicing unhealthy habits or mishandling the lenses can cause severe pain or permanent loss of eyesight.

If you're considering talking to your eye doctor about using these tools for sight improvement, it's crucial to understand how to use them safely. Do some research before meeting with your physician to make sure you understand the correct process for using contacts.

COMMON ISSUES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that keratitis, or an inflammation of the cornea, is linked to those who wear contact lenses. A type of the disease is called microbial keratitis occurs when bacteria invade the cornea and include viruses, fungi or parasites. Typically, the eye is only compromised when someone wears the same lens for too long or when the lenses are not adequately cared for.

Follow these tips from the American Optometric Association to avoid an infection from your contact lenses.



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STEPS FOR REMOVING CONTACTS

If you wear contact lenses, you have the responsibility to care for them and your eyes after removal. While the instructions from each manufacturer may differ, these sample steps fit most soft lens types.

- Ensure your hands are clean and dry before handling the lenses. Always start with

the same one first.

- After removal, put the lens in your palm and apply the appropriate solution to each one for about 20 seconds. Then, rinse the lens for about 10 seconds.

- You may need to soak the lens before storing it in its case. Typically, the enclosure should be disposed of every one to three months to avoid contamination.

You can avoid these steps by using disposable contacts that are disposed of after each use.

AVOID USING TAP WATER FOR CLEANING

Unfiltered tap water contains numerous micro-organisms, which can lead to painful infections and impaired vision. Only use an approved solution that is recommended

by your provider when cleaning the lens or case.

Don't Use Unapproved Eye Drops

If you rely on drops to help with dry or red eyes, it's imperative to talk to your doctor before buying over-the-counter medicine. Some styles contain preservatives that can counteract the effects of your lenses and cause toxic outcomes.



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A Window to Your Health

Regular eye exams are not only beneficial for discovering visual problems, but they can also show concerning health issues throughout your body.

As an optometrist performs their inspection, they are granted a view of blood vessels, nerves and connective tissues. These intricate details can reveal patterns that lead to the discovery of severe disease.

When you're committed to getting your eyes examined, finding a specialist

is the first step. If you don't already have a family optometrist, speak with your regular physician for a referral. It's also a good idea to talk with your loved ones who have a relationship with an expert who provides a positive experience.

Once you're established with a physician, they can schedule an appointment and create a schedule for future visits. It's essential to follow their guidelines for your health care. Learn some of the common diseases discovered during eye exams, as reported by the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

BRAIN TUMOR

During an examination, doctors sometimes notice a transmission to the

eye that is caused by increased pressure in the brain, often caused by tumors. They can detect the potential tumor's severity by analyzing changes to the optic nerve that may be swollen. Symptoms like side vision, recent double vision, or changes in your pupil's size may be other signs that immediate care is required.

DIABETES

Early stages of diabetes are often noticed during a visual examination. Your eye is filled with tiny blood vessels. One sure sign is when they begin leaking yellow fluid or blood; getting on top of this disease as soon as symptoms start gives patients an advantage to

maintain it or eliminate it.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

The blood vessels in the back of your eye can also signal high blood pressure if unusual bends, kinks or bleeding are found. Fortunately, the disease can be easily treated with medicine. However, if left without attention, your vision may be compromised by glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration.

While these symptoms don't automatically mean that your health is at risk, it's a good idea to seek assistance from a professional. If there is a problem, they can work out a solution or treatment plan to ease your conditions.

Vision Therapy Basics

If you have ever been skeptical about performing eye exercises to improve your sight, talk to your doctor about vision therapy. This can be a simple way for you to address your vision issues before turning to surgical alternatives.

It is a safe and drug-free program developed for people who must relearn aspects of vision rather than strengthening muscles. The process is beneficial to both adults with limited eyesight and children whose vision affects the way they learn.

Another advantage of the proven programs is that most insurance providers cover some or all the costs. Talk with your provider to determine if your policy includes this type of treatment or find out how you can add it to your coverage. If you're on the fence about giving the therapy a shot, learn the benefits you can expect and enjoy a clearer perspective on life.

WHAT IS VISION THERAPY

The American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus defines vision therapy as an attempt to develop or improve visual skills and abilities. Impactful exercises focus on increasing visual comfort, ease and efficiency while changing vision processing or interpretation of information.

During therapy, experts concentrate on three different categories:

- **Orthoptic vision therapy.** This contains a series of exercises, usually weekly or over several months, performed at



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an optometric office. The process includes measuring eye deviations and managing treatments for intermittent symptoms.

- **Behavioral vision therapy.** Patients practice eye exercise to improve visual processing and visual perception.

- **Reflective error treatment.** Doctors focus on the prevention or correction of errors like nearsightedness.

Based on your eyes' integrity, an ophthalmology expert can design the strategy you need for improvement.

DOES IT WORK?

The Optometrists Network reports that vision therapy is a proven science with more than 260 published articles on its effectiveness. The system involves training the brain to improve

on 17 vital visual skills necessary for reading, writing, learning and sports performance. Enhancing the eye-brain concentration connections is a beneficial treatment that impacts someone at any age.

Discuss with your eye doctor to find out more about therapy sessions in your area and if your situation can improve with treatment.