

A Regular Checkup

THINK YOUR EYES ARE HEALTHY? YOU NEED TO FIND OUT

For being among the most important parts of the human body, eyes don't always get the attention they deserve.

Most of us couldn't imagine life without our eyesight, but when it comes to taking care of our eyes, many of us don't know what to look for. Vision loss can happen so slowly that we don't notice it as a problem, and some serious health issues can start without any obvious symptoms.

That's why it's important to see your eye doctor for regular checkups, even if you think your eyes are perfectly healthy.

SCHEDULE

The American Optometric Association recommends healthy adults get a checkup every two years. Here is their recommendation for people without a history of eye problems, broken down by age:

Birth to 24 months old: At 6 months of age

Two to five years old: At age 3

Ages 6-18: Before the first grade, and every two years thereafter

Ages 18-60: Every two years

Ages 61 and up: Annually

Of course, people who are at risk of eye problems should see their eye doctor even more often. Some examples of things that increase your risk of eye problems include



PHOTO: LEAF / YAYMICRO.COM

The American Optometric Association recommends adults with healthy eyes get a checkup at least once every two years.

diabetes, hypertension or a family history of eye problems; working in a job that requires intense vision use or is hazardous to the eyes; taking drugs that with side effects that impact your vision; wearing contact lenses, having eye surgery or

other health issues, according to the American Optometric Association.

PREVENTABLE PROBLEMS

The most important reason for scheduling your eye

checkups is simple: the vast majority of eye problems are treatable if caught early enough.

There are drugs, eye drops and simple surgical procedures that can solve, or significantly slow the advancement of most eye diseases.

The key is catching them early on, while they're still in their first stages and the easiest to treat. The longer you go without getting your eyes checked, the more likely you are to develop a problem that could have been caught with a regular checkup.

Signs of Eye Problems

ANY CHANGES IN YOUR VISION SHOULD BE CHECKED

Regular eye exams are recommended for everyone, regardless of any signs or symptoms of vision problems.

In between checkups, though, you should always be on the lookout for any potential vision issues. Prevent Blindness America, an organization that promotes eye health and fights vision loss, has compiled a list of symptoms of eye problems that the public should be aware of.

CHANGES IN VISION

If you ever have a change in the appearance of your eyes or in your eyesight, you should schedule an exam with your eye doctor immediately.

Some examples include:

- Unusual trouble adjusting to dark rooms
- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Squinting or blinking due to unusual sensitivity to light or glare
- Change in color of iris
- Red-rimmed, encrusted or swollen lids
- Recurrent pain in or around eyes
- Double vision
- Dark spot at the center of viewing
- Lines and edges appear distorted or wavy
- Excess tearing or “watery eyes”
- Dry eyes with itching or burning
- Seeing spots, ghost-like images.

EMERGENCY PROBLEMS

In addition, Prevent Blindness America also lists several symptoms that could require emergency medical attention. If you have any of these issues, you should seek medical help as quickly as possible:

- Sudden loss of vision in one eye
- Sudden hazy or blurred vision
- Flashes of light or black spots
- Halos or rainbows around light
- Curtain-like blotting out of vision
- Loss of peripheral (side) vision



Find the Perfect Fit

CHOOSE THE RIGHT GLASSES, GET THEM PROFESSIONALLY ADJUSTED

When you have trouble seeing clearly, you know it's important to see an eye doctor to diagnose the problem.

But what about actually getting your eyeglasses or contact lenses fitted? That's something that can make a big difference in your happiness with the new glasses or contacts.

If your prescription from the eye doctor isn't followed precisely, or if your new glasses or contacts are too uncomfortable to use daily, then they're simply not going to do a good job correcting your vision. That's why it's so important to choose the right glasses from the right provider.

BACKGROUND

Filling vision prescriptions is a high-precision job that requires frequent training and advanced equipment to keep up with all the changes in vision correction products. Lens materials and manufacturing procedures can change over time, so you want to find an optician who is fully up to date on how to provide the best fitting for your needs.

Ask about what certifications your optician holds, along with what kind of ongoing training they've



PHOTO: MONKEYBUSINESS / YAYMICRO.COM

Shopping for new glasses can be a fun experience if you have good, professional advice and proper fitting.

received. A certified optician will have undergone all the necessary training to stay up-to-date in their field, which is always a good sign.

SELECTION

While your budget is always an important consideration, you may find that spending a bit extra for an

upgrade will be worth it considering you'll be using these glasses or contacts every day for the next year or two. It's a good idea to ask about the advantages of various products — from color-changing lenses and coatings for glasses, to various types of contacts on the market — to see what would work best with your budget and life-

style.

If you're looking for a particular brand or designer for the frames, call ahead of time to see if they're available.

COMFORT

Finally, one of the most important jobs when getting new glasses is making sure

you're comfortable using the products you select.

A good optician will help guide you to products that are easy to use and maintain, and that's something that varies for each individual. Some people may prefer the lightness of metal frames, for example; others may have sensitive skin that's bothered by certain metal alloys.

For glasses, it's important to get professional help from someone who will help you adjust and fit the frames to your specific face shape. If your current glasses are leaving blisters or marks on your face, that's probably because they need to be adjusted properly.

A good fit from a talented optician's office can make sure your glasses fit comfortably and securely on your face, without feeling awkward on your nose or behind your ears.

Overall, a good fit from your glasses is important to your eye health. Along with the eye doctor you choose, the glasses you select are a big part of your overall vision health, so take the time to pick the right ones.