



OLV HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY

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Healthy Vision

People of all ages should have their eyesight tested **once a year** to keep their vision at its best. Children usually have vision screening in school or at their Pediatricians office. Adults may require more than vision screening. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, or a family history of eye disease, you need yearly comprehensive dilated exams. African Americans have a higher risk than Caucasians to an onset of glaucoma at an earlier age. Eye exams are advised starting at age 40.

Eye exams include:

- A **visual field test** gauges the scope of what you are able to see. Looking straight ahead and with altering eyes covered, you'll respond each time you see a light or the examiners hand held at the periphery of our vision. Loss of peripheral vision may be sign glaucoma.
- A **visual acuity** test detects how well you see at various distances. Looking at an eye chart about 20 feet away, you'll read aloud the smallest letters you see, first with one eye covered, then the other. The results can help assess disease progression or response to treatment, and may reveal a need for low-vision aids.
- Next, the **eyes are dilated** by placing drops in each eye to widen the pupil, which allows more light to enter the eye. A magnifying lens is used to examine the tissues at the back of the eye, including the retina (light-sensitive tissue), the macula, and the optic nerve. Damage to these areas may be a sign of diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, or age-related macular degeneration.
- **Tonometry** measures the eye's interior pressure by sending a quick puff of air onto its surface. High intraocular pressure is a risk factor for optic nerve damage associated with glaucoma.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye that affects vision. Most cataracts are related to aging. By age 80, more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery.

- The lens must be clear for the retina to receive a sharp image. The lens is made of mostly water and protein. The protein is arranged in a precise way that keeps the lens clear and lets light pass through it
- As we age, some of the protein may clump together and start to cloud a small area of the lens, resulting in a cataract.
- Symptoms of cataracts: Cloudy or blurry vision; colors seem to fade; glare, headlights, lamps, sunlight may appear too bright. A halo may appear around lights. Poor night vision.

Age-related macular degeneration (ADM) is the leading cause of vision loss among people age 50 and older. It causes damage to the **macula**, a small spot near the center of the retina and part of the eye needed for sharp, central vision, which lets us see objects that are straight ahead. Risk factors:

- **Age** is a major risk factor. The disease is most likely to occur after age 60.
- **Smoking.** Research shows that smoking doubles the risk of ADM.
- **Race.** ADM is more common among Caucasians than among African-Americans or Hispanics/Latinos.
- **Family History and Genetics.**

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss and blindness. With early detection and treatment, you can often protect your eyes against serious vision loss. Risk factors for optic nerve damage:

- Eye pressure is a major risk factor for optic nerve damage.
- Blood pressure. Make sure that your blood pressure is at a proper level for your body.
- African-Americans over age 40. Everyone over age 60, especially Mexican Americans.
- People with a family history of glaucoma.