

Integrated Regional Falls Program



North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

Vision and Older Adults

As we age it is normal to experience changes in our vision. These changes may range from mildly irritating to more serious eye diseases.

Changes can include:

- Difficulty reading small print
- Taking longer to adjust from light to dark
- More sensitivity to glare from sunlight or unshielded light bulbs
- Loss of depth perception, which makes it difficult to judge distances
- Seeing flashes of light or rapid movement from the corners of your eyes
- Experiencing uncontrolled eye movement
- Difficulty in seeing contrasts and colour
- Dry eyes or watery eyes

Signs of Vision Loss

Signs that you may have vision loss include:

- Squinting
- Choosing bright over dull coloured objects or clothing
- Spilling food or drinks because you misjudge where items are
- Finding it hard to copy from written texts
- Becoming clumsy, such as having difficulty buttoning a shirt
- Having difficulties with driving at night
- Making driving mistakes, such as missing street signs or traffic signs
- **Falling** because of a missed step or an unseen object on the floor.



Regular eye examinations can help to detect problems early on and help maintain good vision. For most seniors, normal age-related vision loss can be corrected with glasses, medication, or surgery. With more serious conditions, using vision aids and making changes to their homes and routines can help seniors stay safe and independent.

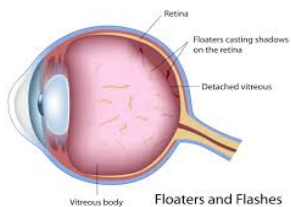
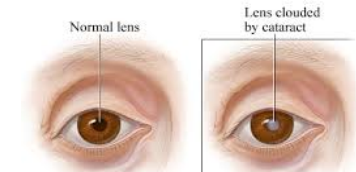
Protect Your Vision and Minimize Your Risk

- Have your eyes examined on a regular basis
- Reduce eye strain and reduce **falls** by turning on the lights
- Don't smoke; smoking tobacco is a major risk factor in the early onset of age-related macular degeneration
- Reduce glare by using lampshades, computer glare shields and sunglasses (even on cloudy days)
- Protect your eyes from accidents in your home.
 - Put a grease shield over frying foods.
 - Make sure spray cans and nozzles are pointed away from you when spraying.
 - Wear safety glasses in the workshop and when using chemical products such as ammonia.
 - Be careful of recoil when using bungee cords and vacuum cords.

- Eat your carrots. A daily dose of the vitamins and minerals found in melons, citrus fruit, carrots, spinach, and kale may help slow the progress of age-related eye diseases such as macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts.
- Don't drive at night if you have problems with depth perception, glare, or other vision difficulties.
- If you suffer from dry eyes (gritty, itchy, or burning), a home humidifier and eye drops may help. If the condition persists speak to your physician.
- If your eyes water, you may be sensitive to light, wind, or temperature change. Shielding your eyes or wearing sunglasses may solve the problem. However, this condition may be the result of an eye infection, eye irritation, or a blocked tear duct, so if the condition persists speak to your physician.

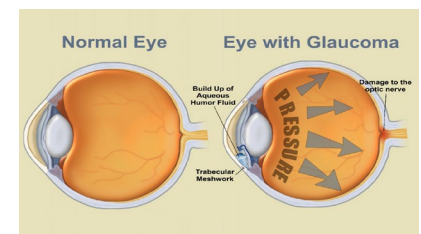
Diseases and Conditions That Can Affect Vision

Cataracts: are a gradual clouding of the natural lens of the eye, preventing light from reaching the retina. The clouding may prevent you from being able to read or drive unless the cataract is removed. Cataract removal is one of the most successful and common surgeries performed today.



Floaters: are tiny spots or specks that float across your field of vision. They are often normal and sometimes moving the eye around will make the spots shift out of your central vision. However, if you notice a sudden change in the number or types of spots, or if they come with light flashes, you should see your eye doctor as soon as possible. They may be signs of a serious eye disease.

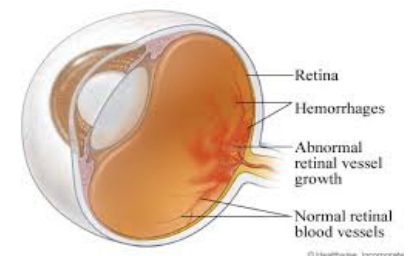
Glaucoma: develops when the pressure within the eye starts to destroy the nerve fibres within the retina. If not treated early, glaucoma can cause vision loss and blindness. Regular eye examinations are required to detect it. Treatment may include eye drops, medication, or surgery.



The center of the macula is called the fovea and is responsible for fine detail vision - our central (or reading) vision, both for distance and close up. When the eye is directed at an object to be seen, whichever part is focused on the fovea will be the clearest, the most

Age-related Macular Degeneration: occurs when the macula (the central part of the retina responsible for sharp focus) is damaged. This damage may be the result of many factors, including aging, and it causes permanent loss of central vision. Regular eye exams can detect the disease early on and laser treatments can slow down the central vision loss.

Diabetic Retinopathy: is an eye problem linked to diabetes. Changes to the blood vessels caused by diabetes can starve the retina of oxygen. This condition can go through many stages and can result in blindness. Symptoms include cloudy vision and seeing spots. If you have diabetes, be sure to have regular eye examinations and tell your eye specialist that you are diabetic. Treatment can slow down vision loss. Laser treatment in the early stages is often successful.



References

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