

Protect Your Sight

Eye conditions and diseases that can rob your family of their vision could strike people at any age in life, from newborns to seniors.

In honor of May's Healthy Vision Month, Eye M.D.s across the country are urging Americans to take care of their eyes, as well as the eyes of their family. Pay attention to warning signs and visit an Eye M.D. regularly.

Many people associate eye problems with getting older. While it's true that seniors are at higher risk for a lot of eye problems, some of those problems actually start earlier, and vision loss could have been prevented if the problem was caught sooner. Preschoolers, senior citizens and people with diabetes, as well as others with high risk factors for certain eye problems; all need regular eye care. Too often they don't get it, and the sad result is vision loss.

Infants and toddlers should be screened for common childhood eye problems, such as strabismus (crossed eyes) and amblyopia (lazy eye), during their regular pediatric appointments. Vision testing is recommended for all children starting at around 3 years of age.

Some warning signs that your child may have vision problems include wandering or crossed eyes, a family history of childhood vision problems, redness, discharge, a disinterest in reading or viewing distant objects, and squinting or turning the head in an unusual manner while watching TV.

Most children and teenagers have healthy eyes, but they still need to take care of their vision. The major danger to the eyes at these ages is accidental injury. Eye M.D.'s recommend protective eyewear for all activities that present a risk of eye injury. An Eye M.D. can recommend and fit appropriate protective eyewear.

Even the young adult and middle-aged groups can be affected by eye problems. Those at risk for eye disease include African-Americans over age 40 (glaucoma), people with diabetes (diabetic retinopathy), those over age 60 (macular degeneration and cataracts) and those with a family history of eye problems. If you fall into one of these groups, check with your Eye M.D. to find out how often you need to have a complete eye exam. These individuals should have a complete eye exam at least once between the ages of 20 and 29, at least twice between the ages of 30 and 39 and every two to four years between the ages of 40 and 65.

Seniors over age 65 should be examined at least every one to two years for cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and other eye conditions. Those with diabetes should be examined every year.

Protecting your eyes from accidents, as well as early detection and treatment of eye problems, are the best ways for you and your family to take care of your vision throughout life. So if you or your family are at risk for eye diseases or experience any eye problems, visit your Eye M.D.