

SAVE YOUR VISION

Are you at risk for losing your sight? Each year millions of Americans lose their good vision due to disease, accidents and injuries. February is Save Your Vision month and the American Academy of Ophthalmology has some advice to help protect you from becoming a statistic:

Have your eyes checked regularly by either an ophthalmologist (Eye M.D.) or optometrist. Early detection is the key to reducing or preventing vision loss from diseases such as glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy—the leading causes of blindness among older Americans. Some eye diseases require regular visits to your ophthalmologist for monitoring.

- **Glaucoma** is a group of diseases typically associated with elevated pressure inside the eye that can damage the optic nerve and cause vision loss. Usually there are no warning signs. The earlier glaucoma is diagnosed and treated, the more likely you are to retain your vision. It can affect anyone, but people over 50, African-Americans and Latin-Americans are most at risk. If you fall into one of these categories, consult your ophthalmologist to determine how often your eyes should be examined.
- **AMD** is a progressive disease that destroys central vision, making driving, reading, writing and recognizing faces difficult. People 65 and older are most at risk and should have an eye exam every two years.
- **Diabetic retinopathy** is a vision problem caused by diabetes. Treatment is most effective when the disease is diagnosed in the early stages. Americans with diabetes must have a dilated eye exam from an ophthalmologist every year, and keep blood sugar levels under control through diet and exercise.

Some of the most ordinary activities can cause extraordinary injuries. Fortunately, taking the simplest of measures can prevent about 90 percent of these injuries.

Here's how:

- Make sure your children wear sunglasses to avoid the sun's harmful UV rays. Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight over time can damage the eyes.
- Wear protective eyewear appropriate for your sport. Thousands of sports and recreation-related eye injuries occur every year.
- Leave fireworks in the hands of trained professionals. Attend only professional firework displays.
- Wear protective eyewear while changing your car battery, mowing your lawn, working with chemicals and performing other hazardous activities around the home and workplace.

Information provided by Dr. Mark Weingarten, M.D., a board certified ophthalmologist at Rochester Eye Care, located at 1135 West University Drive in Rochester. For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Weingarten, call (248)650-2255.