

# Aging and Your Eyes



Are you holding the newspaper farther away from your eyes than you used to? Join the crowd – age can bring changes that affect your eyesight. Some changes are more serious than others, but no matter what the problem, there are things you can do to protect your vision. The key is to have regular eye exams so you can find problems early.

## Five Steps to Protect Your Eyesight

1. Have your eyes checked every 1 or 2 years by an eye care professional. This can be an ophthalmologist or optometrist. He or she should put drops in your eyes to enlarge (dilate) your pupils. This is the only way to find some eye diseases, such as diabetic retinopathy, that have no early signs or symptoms. If you wear glasses, they should be checked too.
2. Find out if you are at high risk for eye disease. Are you over age 65? Are you African-American and over age 40? Do you or people in your family have diabetes or eye disease? If so, you need to have a dilated eye exam.
3. Have regular physical exams to check for diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. These diseases can cause eye problems if not treated.
4. See an eye care professional right away if you suddenly cannot see or everything looks dim or if you see flashes of light. Also see an eye care professional if you have eye pain, fluid coming from the eye, double vision, redness, or swelling of your eye or eyelid.
5. Wear sunglasses that block ultraviolet (UV) radiation and a hat with a wide brim when outside. This will protect your eyes from too much sunlight, which can raise your risk of getting cataracts.

## Low Vision

Low vision affects some people as they age. Low vision means you cannot fix your eyesight with glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. It can get in the way of your normal daily routine. You may have low vision if you:

- have trouble seeing well enough to do everyday tasks like reading, cooking, or sewing;

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- can't recognize the faces of friends or family;
- have trouble reading street signs; or
- find that lights don't seem as bright as usual.

If you have any of these problems, ask your eye care professional to test you for low vision. There are special tools and aids to help people with low vision read, write, and manage daily living tasks. Lighting can be changed to suit your needs. You also can try large-print reading materials, magnifying aids, closed-circuit televisions, audio tapes, electronic reading machines, and computers that use large print and speech.

## Other simple changes also may help:

- Write with bold, black felt-tip markers.
- Use paper with bold lines to help you write in a straight line.
- Put colored tape on the edge of your steps to help you keep from falling.
- Install dark-colored light switches and electrical outlets that you can see easily against light-colored walls.
- Use motion lights that turn on by themselves when you enter a room. These may help you avoid accidents caused by poor lighting.
- Use telephones, clocks, and watches with large numbers; put large-print labels on the microwave and stove.

From: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/eyes.htm>

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