

## **AGING EYES BRING CHANGES TO YOUR VISION, NOT YOUR INDEPENDENCE**

*See your eye doctor for regular comprehensive eye exams to maintain your quality of life*

**MADISON, WI** – As we age, there are certainly advantages to which we look forward, such as enjoying retirement and spending time with your grandchildren. However, there are challenges as well, such as changes in vision and an increased potential for developing age-related eye disease. Although it's very likely vision changes will occur as you age, these changes don't have to compromise your quality of life. The key to living with these challenges is simply a matter of making smart lifestyle choices and receiving regular comprehensive eye exams from your eye doctor.

One such lifestyle choice is being attentive to warning signs of age-related vision and eye health care problems that could cause vision loss. According to 2014 Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) President and Platteville, WI optometrist Dr. Michael Tashner, "Many eye diseases have no early symptoms, and they can develop without your awareness until already becoming more advanced." Common eye diseases that can permanently affect your vision after age 60 include: Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD), which causes loss of central vision; glaucoma, where damage to the optic nerve results in vision loss; diabetic retinopathy, affecting diabetic patients and causing clouding of vision (can cause blindness); and cataracts, characterized by cloudy/opaque areas in the lens of the eye. "An annual eye exam performed by your eye doctor can help detect and manage serious eye diseases and increase your chances of maintaining healthy vision," confirms Dr. Tashner.

Another such lifestyle choice is awareness of how other health problems can affect your vision. Individuals with diabetes or hypertension (high blood pressure) as well as those taking medications with vision and eye health-related side effects are at greatest risk for developing vision problems. As these other health care conditions commonly impact aging adults, regular eye exams in your senior years become even more important to your independence.

According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) Ninth Annual American Eye-Q® survey, 78% of people aged 55 or older reported experiencing vision problems. Of this group, a majority identified difficulty with far sightedness (the ability to see objects close up) and near sightedness (the ability to see objects far away) as the primary problems, particularly at night and when light glare is present. Due to these commonly-experienced problems, driving can become more difficult. Vision can be impaired by headlights of oncoming traffic at night or by bright sunlight, and judging distance and speed poses more of a challenge. Stay safe when driving, especially at night, by reducing speed and limiting yourself to daytime driving when possible, by using extra caution at intersections, and by seeing your eye doctor for annual eye exams.

As we get older, we want to maintain the independent lifestyle we've always enjoyed. At times, some people over age 60 can experience loss of sight beyond the normal, age-related vision changes. Your eye doctor may be able to help you with low vision treatment options, such as spectacle-mounted magnifiers, hand-held or spectacle-mounted telescopes, hand-held and stand magnifiers, and even video magnification. There are numerous other products designed to help those with vision impairments as well, such as large-print publications, books-on-tape, etc.; consult your eye doctor for details.

Knowing what to expect as you get older and when to seek professional care are essential to protecting your vision and eye health and your quality of life. The WOA recommends receiving yearly eye exams from your eye doctor for patients over the age of 60. To locate a licensed eye doctor near you, please visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members>.

### **About the American Eye-Q® survey**

*The ninth annual American Eye-Q® survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From March 20-25, 2014, PSB conducted 1,000 online interviews among Americans 18 years and older who embodied a nationally representative sample of the U.S. general population (Margin of error is plus or minus 3.10 percentage points at a 95% confidence level).*

### **About the Wisconsin Optometric Association**

*The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Approximately 640 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA's website at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).*