

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 grandchildren. However, there are challenges as well, such as changes in vision and an increased potential for developing age-related eye disease. According to the American Optometric Association's (AOA) 2015 American Eye-Q[®] survey, the inability to live independently would concern older Americans the most if they developed serious vision problems. Although it is likely vision changes will occur as you age, these changes don't have to compromise your quality of life.

Comprehensive eye exams performed by a doctor of optometry are one of the most important, preventive ways to preserve vision, and are the only way to accurately assess eye health, diagnose an eye disorder or disease, and determine the need for glasses or contact lenses. According to 2015 Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) President and Sturgeon Bay, WI optometrist Dr. Eric Paulsen, "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), glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataracts. "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. Paulsen.

Also according to the American Eye-Q[®] survey, 75% of Americans aged 55 or older reported experiencing vision problems. It's especially important for older adults to visit their doctor of optometry to ensure their vision is good, in order to prevent falls and driving accidents.

Older adults can ease the stress on their eyes by making some simple changes:

- Stay safe while driving: wear quality sunglasses for daytime driving, and use anti-reflective lenses to reduce headlight glare. Limit driving at dusk, dawn, or at night, if seeing under low light is difficult. Use extra caution at intersections, and reduce speed.
- Use contrasting colors: define essential objects in your home, such as light switches and telephones, with different colors so that they can be spotted quickly and easily.
- Give the eyes a boost: install clocks, thermometers, and timers with large block letters. Magnifying glasses can also be used for reading, when larger print is not available. Text size on the screen of smartphones and tablets can also be increased.

In addition, it's important to know 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.

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. Receiving eye exams yearly (or more frequently, if recommended by your eye doctor) allows adults to continue leading active and productive lifestyles. To locate a licensed eye doctor near you, please visit <http://www.woa-eyes.org/members>.

About the American Eye-Q[®] survey

The 10th annual American Eye-Q[®] survey was created and commissioned in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates (PSB). From February 19-March 4, 2015, 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 percent 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 630 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.