

# Growing Older with Good Vision



Illinois Society for the  
Prevention of Blindness



## **Growing Older with Good Vision**

AS YOU GROW OLDER, THERE'S A LOT YOU CAN DO TO STAY HEALTHY. KEEPING ACTIVE, EATING RIGHT AND PAYING ATTENTION TO HOW YOU FEEL ARE ALL PART OF HEALTHY LIVING AS YOU AGE.

GOOD VISION IS ALSO PART OF FEELING YOUR BEST. YOUR VISION MAY CHANGE WITH AGE. YOU MAY NEED MORE LIGHT TO SEE. IT MAY GET HARDER TO TELL SOME COLORS APART. YOU MAY HAVE A HARDER TIME SEEING THINGS CLOSE UP. IT MAY GET HARDER TO ADJUST YOUR EYES TO GLARE OR THE DARK. BUT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING TO SEE BETTER AND KEEP YOUR EYES HEALTHY.

THESE THREE STEPS WILL HELP YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR SIGHT:

- 1. VISIT AN EYE DOCTOR REGULARLY.**
- 2. MAKE CHANGES TO HELP YOURSELF SEE BETTER.**
- 3. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.**

## Visit an eye doctor regularly

If you are 55 or older, you should get a dilated eye exam at least once every two years.

If you have diabetes or other health problems, you may need to see an eye doctor more often.

The best time to see your eye doctor is before you notice any problems. Early on, you may not notice a change in your sight if you have an eye disease.

## How can an eye doctor help me protect my sight?

At your eye exam, the eye doctor will:

- > Treat common eye problems.
- > Keep your eyeglass prescription up-to-date.
- > Check for eye diseases.

## How will the eye doctor treat my problems?

### GLASSES OR CONTACT LENSES

You may have a harder time seeing objects up close as you get older. This common problem is called presbyopia. Your eye doctor can prescribe glasses or contact lenses to help you focus on close objects.

### EYE DROPS AND MEDICINE

Your eye doctor may prescribe eye drops or other medicine to treat eye diseases. Your eye doctor may also recommend eye drops for more common problems such as watery or dry eyes.

### SURGERY

If you have a serious eye disease your doctor may recommend surgery.



## WHAT IS A DILATED EYE EXAM?

The dilated eye exam will allow your eye doctor to check for eye diseases that become more common with age.

The following eye diseases can cause serious loss of vision if not found and treated early.

### CATARACT

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye. Most people aged 65 and older will get a cataract at some point. Younger people can also get a cataract at some point. In almost all cases, surgery can improve vision. But not everyone who develops a cataract will need surgery.

### GLAUCOMA

This disease is a leading cause of blindness. It may develop slowly and cause a loss of side vision (peripheral vision). Any vision lost to glaucoma is gone forever. But in most cases, finding the disease early and treating it with medicine will control it.

### DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

This disease is caused by diabetes. If not treated, it can lead to blindness. It damages blood vessels in the eye and can blur and distort vision. Although laser treatment can help in some cases, the best way to prevent this disease is by controlling diabetes. That means controlling blood sugar levels.

### AMD

Age-related macular degeneration is a disease that damages the center part of vision. It is a leading cause of sight-loss for older Americans. Treatment can help if the disease is found early.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER



### **Talk with your eye doctor.**

Ask your doctor to explain anything you don't understand. Tell your eye doctor about eye problems you may have noticed. Find out when you should come back for your next eye exam.

### **Follow your doctor's advice.**

Follow the schedule for taking your medicines. Skipping a dose or taking medicine late may cause more vision loss.

## When should I see an eye doctor right away?

See your eye doctor if you notice a change in your vision. Even small changes may be caused by serious problems such as glaucoma or other eye diseases.

## Growing Older, Driving Safely

Safe driving requires complex visual processing—abilities that may begin to decline as you age.

A loss in your visual abilities could endanger you and others on the road. But you can maintain independence and drive safely longer if you:

- > Get a complete eye exam regularly.
- > Know the vision issues that can affect your driving.
- > Understand the laws in your state about driving as you age.
- > Talk to your doctor about maintaining your fitness to drive.

For more information about driving safely, please visit our website at: [www.preventblindness.org/eye\\_problems/driving.html](http://www.preventblindness.org/eye_problems/driving.html)

## Make Changes to Help Yourself See Better

Small changes in the way you live can often help you see better as you age. They can make life safer and more fun!

- > Wear sunglasses if you are sensitive to bright light, and anytime you are outdoors in bright sunshine.
- > Improve lighting around the house.
- > When working around the house or playing sports, wear safety eyewear. This will protect your eyes from injury.

If you have lost some sight to eye disease or eye injury, low vision aids can help you stay independent. Special training, called vision rehabilitation, can give you skills for living with low vision. Low vision aids include:

- > Magnifying glasses, screens and stands
- > Telescopic lenses
- > High-intensity reading lamps
- > Large-print newspapers, magazines and books
- > Close-circuit TVs that magnify a printed page on screen
- > Computers

## Take Care of Yourself

Good health is an important part of good vision. You can lower your risk of eye disease and vision loss if you:

- > Eat healthy foods
- > Stay active
- > Control blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes or other health problems
- > Quit smoking

Healthy habits lead to healthy eyes. Remember, growing older with good vision is a key to an active and independent life.

## WE CAN HELP YOU LEARN MORE ABOUT GROWING OLDER WITH GOOD VISION.

If you have questions or would like to know more, call the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness at 312-922-8710, or visit us at [eyehealthillinois.org](http://eyehealthillinois.org)

*The information and recommendations contained in this publication have been compiled from sources considered to be accurate. The publication is provided with the understanding that the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness (ISPB) and Prevent Blindness America are not engaged in rendering professional eye care services through its distribution. ISPB and Prevent Blindness America do not intend that this publication serve as a complete resource for eye health, eye care or eye safety information, or as a substitute for the advice of a professional eye care provider.*



## Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness

The Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness was founded in 1916 to prevent the tragedy of needless blindness. Dedicated to the care, protection and preservation of sight, ISPBI programs stress education, information, eye safety and research.

For more information on ISPBI, or to make a contribution, call 1.312.922.8710 or visit us on the Web at [www.eyehhealthillinois.org](http://www.eyehhealthillinois.org).

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This brochure was created for the Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness by Prevent Blindness America.

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening training, community and patient service programs and research.

For more information on Prevent Blindness America, call 1.800.331.2020 or visit us on the Web at [www.preventblindness.org](http://www.preventblindness.org).