

Hints from the Heart



Keeping an Eye On Vision!

Our eyes function differently when we reach our 60s than they did when we were in our 30s. By the time we celebrate our 80th birthday, our eyesight will have almost certainly declined further. Such changes in vision are perfectly normal with few serious risks and usually easily corrected with eyeglasses or contact lenses.

How do you know what constitutes a “normal” change in vision strength and what may be more serious?

4 Signs of Vision Changes:

1. Symptom: Difficulty reading newsprint or prescription bottles.

Normally caused by Presbyopia or the tightening of the muscles of the eye that allow us to focus at close distances. Usually after the age 40, this condition occurs naturally and is easily corrected with bifocals or reading glasses.

2. Symptom: Losing the ability to see distances clearly.

Reduced visual acuity also may occur. Normal visual acuity is 20/20 for a young person, and 20/40 for an older person. In other words, an older person will normally be able to see at a 20-foot distance what a younger person sees at a 40-foot distance. This is not a dramatic enough change to prevent you from functioning fairly normally.

3. Symptom: Increased need for light. Difficulty focusing on close tasks like sewing or handcrafts.

As we grow older, the once-clear lens of the eye grows progressively hazy and yellow, allowing for less light to pass through. An older person normally requires four times more light than a younger person. By age 80, it might be ten times. To compensate, natural sunlight works best or natural full spectrum bulbs that imitate sunlight.

4. Symptom: Are my socks black or is one dark blue? Its hard to see the white plates on a white tablecloth.

It's common for the aging eye to experience reduced contrast sensitivity, which makes it difficult to differentiate similar patterns and colors. The simple use of bolder contrasts can make your home safer and easier to navigate.

At any age, it's important to have your eyes checked regularly. If you experience any severe issues or warning signs such as blurred vision, recurrent pain in or around the eye, double vision, flashes or halos around lights, changes in the color of the iris or development of persistent floaters, contact your eye care professional as soon as possible.

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