

It's All About the Eyes

I recently had to renew my driver's license; my only two concerns were the wait at the license office and the vision check. I was lucky with the wait, I was the only one there. The vision check went fine also, but it made me realize my eyes were not as good as they were the last time I renewed.

As we age, we may begin to notice changes in our vision, difficulty seeing up close, needing more time to adjust to changing light levels, even distinguishing different color such as blue and black. These can be normal and possibly corrected with glasses or contacts. However, sometimes there can be more serious eye issues.

Dr. Meredith McLeod D.O. an optometrist with Bell Family Eye Care told me recently there are several eye issues that affect seniors. Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is one of the leading causes of vision loss for older adults. AMD is the blurring of your central vision. You may notice blurriness or a change in your central vision, trouble seeing in low light and straight lines may appear to be wavy. If you notice, any of these symptoms get your eyes checked immediately.

Glaucoma is a chronic eye disease caused by pressure build up in the eye resulting in damage to the optic nerve. Glaucoma may not present with any early symptoms and is known as the "silent blinder", it is the leading cause of irreversible blindness. Having a family history of Glaucoma is a known risk factor.

Diabetic retinopathy is an eye disease caused by diabetes; it affects the vessels and nerve tissues in the eye. There may be no symptoms in the early stages as the disease progresses you may have blurry spots or double vision, dark or floating spots, pain and pressure. Reducing your blood sugars and controlling diabetes can reduce or eliminate the risk or slow the progression of the disease.

Cataracts are the clouding of the lens in the eye; things will look cloudy or blurry or you could see a glare or halos when driving at night. Cataract surgery to remove the blurry lens and replacing it with a clear, artificial lens is one of the most common and safe surgeries performed.

Dry Eye Syndrome is when your tear ducts no longer work as they should. Symptoms include burning, gritty feeling, watering or tearing eyes that get worse at the end of the day. Eye drops or ointments may be needed to help with the issue.

Many eye issues can have similar or no symptoms. Dr. McLeod recommends everyone, especially seniors have a yearly eye exam with retinol photos so any problems can be detected and treated early. Other ways she suggests to protect eye health is to wear sunglasses and a hat to protect eyes from the sun. Anti-reflective coatings on prescription glasses and sunglasses can help relieve eyestrain and fatigue. If you are on a computer or other screen, take frequent breaks to give your eyes a rest. For eye health as well as general health try to eat right, get exercise and get tested and treatment for diabetes. If you have any concerns about your vision, please call you eye care professional to get checked and treated for any issues.

If you have aging questions or need information on programs, please call Aging Matters 1-800-392-8771, because Aging Matters.