

**S E E  
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N E W L I G H T**



**WE'VE ALL HEARD THE ENGLISH PROVERB –  
“THE EYES ARE THE WINDOW TO THE SOUL.”**

But your eyes are so much more than that! Of the five senses, sight is the one that people fear losing the most.

There are many things that you can do to protect your sight and your eye health. Simply knowing about precautions and the common signs and symptoms of problems are the first steps to ensuring healthy eyes that function well your entire life. Read on to learn about common eye conditions and myths, and what you can do to *See Yourself in a Whole New Light.*

*Spirit of*  
**Women**

*See Yourself in a Whole New Light* is powered by Spirit of Women®, a national network of hospitals and healthcare providers across the United States that ascribe to the highest standards of excellence in women's health, education, and community outreach.

## COMMON EYE PROBLEMS INCLUDE:

**Cataracts** - A cataract is a clouding of the lens in your eye which affects your vision. Cataracts are very common in older people. By age 80, more than half of all people in the United States either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery.

### Common symptoms are:

- **Blurry vision**
- **Colors that seem faded**
- **Glare or not being able to see well at night**
- **Double vision**
- **Frequent prescription changes in your eye wear**

**CONJUNCTIVITIS**—Or “pink eye”. It can cause swelling, itching, burning, discharge and redness of the protective membrane that lines the eyelids and covers exposed areas of the white of the eye.

### Causes include:

- **Bacterial or viral infection**
- **Allergies**
- **Substances that cause irritation**
- **Contact lens products, eye drops, or eye ointments**

Pink eye usually does not affect vision. Infectious pink eye can easily spread from one person to another. The infection will clear in most cases without medical care, but bacterial pink eye needs treatment with antibiotic eye drops or ointment.



**CATARACTS**—usually develop slowly. New glasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses or magnifying lenses can help at first. Surgery is an option that involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial lens. Wearing sunglasses and a hat with a brim to block ultraviolet sunlight may help to delay cataracts.

**GLAUCOMA**—Glaucoma damages the eye’s optic nerve. It is a leading cause of blindness in the United States and usually happens when the fluid pressure inside the eyes slowly rises, damaging the optic nerve. Often there are initially no symptoms, but a comprehensive eye exam can detect it. People at risk should get eye exams at least every two years.

### They include:

- **African Americans over age 40**
- **People over age 60, especially Mexican Americans**
- **People with a family history of glaucoma**

Early treatment can help protect your eyes against vision loss. Treatments usually include prescription eye drops and/or surgery.

**RETINAL DISORDERS**—The retina is a layer of tissue in the back of your eye that senses light and sends images to your brain. In the center of this nerve tissue is the macula. It provides the sharp, central vision needed for reading, driving and seeing fine detail. Retinal disorders affect this vital tissue that can affect your vision, and some can be serious enough to cause blindness.

### Examples are:

- **Retinal detachment - a medical emergency, when the retina is pulled away from the back of the eye**
- **Macular pucker - scar tissue on the macula**
- **Macular hole - a small break in the macula that usually happens to people over age 60**
- **Floaters - cobwebs or specks in your field of vision**

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## CARING FOR YOUR EYES

There are many things that you can do to care for your eyes. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that everyone have a baseline exam at age 40. Anyone experiencing a change in vision or other symptoms should be examined immediately.

Good nutrition is always on the list of what you can do for yourself. Eating healthy dense foods keeps your body and your eyes strong. There is reason to believe that Vitamin A, Zinc, and Antioxidants play a positive role in eye health and maintenance of vision. And finally, be sure to avoid eye injury. Be aware of things that fly, recoil, spill, or splash, and wear safety glasses or goggles when appropriate (even for sports) – and remember eyeglasses are not safety glasses.

## EYE HEALTH MYTHS – FACT OR FICTION

### True:

- **Eating carrots improves sight**
- **Children with crossed eyes can be treated**
- **Looking at the sun damages your sight**
- **Using artificial sweeteners makes your eyes more sensitive to light**

### Myth:

- **Sitting too close to the TV damages your vision**
- **Reading in the dark weakens eyesight**
- **Using glasses or contact lenses weakens eyesight**
- **There’s nothing you can do to prevent vision loss**
- **A nightlight contributes to nearsightedness**



Source: National Institutes of Health