

## Vision Conditions

What condition are your eyes in today?

Almost everyone will experience some form of eye trouble at one time or another. For example, your eyes might feel itchy or look bloodshot. They may be particularly sensitive to light because of certain medications you are taking. And some medical procedures such as surgery to remove cataracts require post-surgery protection for your eyes to help reduce eye-damaging UV radiation.

As part of enhancing your healthy sight and wellness for today – and for the future – it's important to understand the various conditions that can affect your eyes, how to address these issues, when to seek a solution such as photochromic lenses, and when to visit your eyecare professional.

In general, to maintain healthy sight and reduce the risk of damage to your eyes, make caring for the preciousness of your sight part of your everyday life:

- \* Visit your eyecare professional regularly
- \* Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water a day
- \* Eat properly and take vitamin supplements if recommended
- \* Avoid smoking
- \* Exercise regularly
- \* Rest your eyes and blink frequently when reading, working on your computer or watching television
- \* Avoid rubbing your eyes
- \* Select everyday eyewear that helps protect your eyes from UV light and glare

## Common Eye Conditions

It's also important to be able to recognize common eye conditions and know the steps to take if you are experiencing one of the following.

Remember, this information is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice. Visit our Ask an Eyecare Professional page to get more information or access our Find an Eyecare Professional service to schedule a visit near you. And, when you visit an eyecare professional make sure you understand what kind of coverage your vision benefits provide.

### Minor Eye Irritation

This type of irritation could include sand, dirt, or another foreign body on the eye's surface. To dislodge the object, wash your hands and then flush the eye with lukewarm water for up to 15 minutes. If the object remains embedded, seek professional medical help immediately.

### Conjunctivitis (Pinkeye)

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, or clear membrane covering the white part of the eye and lining of the eyelids. There are actually 20 different types of conjunctivitis, from fairly common strains that usually pose no long-term danger to you or your child's vision, to strains that are resistant to antibiotics. Call or see your doctor to treat pinkeye.

### Dry Eye Syndrome

Itching, burning and irritation of the eyes, sometimes called "dry eye syndrome," is one of the most common problems treated by eyecare professionals. It is usually caused by the quality of the tears that lubricate our eyes. As we age, our bodies produce less oil to seal the eyes' watery layer. Hot, arid climates, air conditioning, certain medicines and irritants such as cigarette smoke can all affect dryness. Your eyecare professional might prescribe "artificial tears" or other eye drops to help alleviate the problem.

### Floaters and Spots

Have you ever noticed a small speck moving in your field of vision? It might be what is called a floater — a tiny clump of gel or cells in the vitreous, the clear, jelly-like fluid inside your eye. Aging, eye injury and breakdown of the vitreous are the main causes of floaters. If you notice a sudden increase in the number of spots you see, call your eyecare professional.

### Photokeratitis

A "sunburn" of the cornea caused by UVB rays. Symptoms include discomfort, blurred vision and light sensitivity. It may also be referred to as radiation keratitis or snowblindness.

### Photophobia

Also called "light sensitivity", is a condition that can have many underlying causes and can be prompted by many medications. Protection from UV radiation is critical for anyone with this condition.

### Presbyopia

A progressive condition that is a natural part of aging. Presbyopia is a decrease in the ability to focus sharply on nearby objects and often results in the need to use magnifying reading glasses, bifocals or progressive lenses.

### Pinguecula

This is a raised growth on the eye that is most often directly related to over-exposure to the sun. A pinguecula is a localized, slightly elevated yellowish area that develops in the eye, and can be more common to people who spend more time in direct sunlight, for work or recreation. A pinguecula does not usually require treatment, but surgery may be necessary for cosmetic concerns. Protecting your eye from UV radiation is a critical preventive measure of this condition.

### Pterygium

This is a raised growth on the eye that is most often directly related to over-exposure to the sun. Dry, dusty conditions may also be a factor. Protecting your eye from UV radiation is also a critical preventive measure of this condition.

### Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration is a leading cause of vision loss and blindness in those 65 years of age and older. And as the US population ages, this is a disease that could become even more prevalent. It is also called AMD or ARMD (age-related macular degeneration), and occurs when the macula — the part of the retina responsible for the sharp, central vision needed to read or drive — degenerates.

### Cataracts

When we hear the word "cataract" we might think of a film on someone's eyes that causes double or blurred vision. But a cataract does not form on our eye, but rather within our eye. Have you ever opened your eyes underwater? People with cataracts say it's like looking through water. In fact, the word "cataract" means waterfall.

A cataract is a clouding of the crystalline lens of our eye that makes it hard to see. In a normal eye, the crystalline lens is almost transparent and can change shape to focus objects at different distances from the eye. When the lens loses its flexibility and becomes "opaque," we call it a cataract.

Some types of cataract formation have been linked to overexposure over a long period of time to ultraviolet (UV) light. As people age, many develop cataracts, but they can be treated with a safe and simple surgical procedure performed by an ophthalmologist. Special precautions must be taken after surgery to ensure that the eye is protected from sunlight. Please consult your eyecare professional to ensure that the proper protective eyewear is prescribed to you.