

What to Expect in an Eye Exam

Vision examinations are an important part of preventive health care. Many eye and vision problems have no obvious signs or symptoms. As a result, individuals are often unaware that problems exist. Early diagnosis and treatment of eye and vision problems are important for maintaining good vision and eye health, and when possible, preventing vision loss.

A comprehensive examination may include, but is not limited to, the following tests:

1. Patient History - This helps to determine any symptoms the individual is experiencing, general health problems and medications taken. The doctor will also ask about any previous eye or health conditions of you and your family members. Some health problems and medications, including diabetes, hypertension, systemic steroids and Plaquenil may affect ocular health and vision.
2. Visual Acuity (VA) – As part of the testing, you are asked to read letters on distance reading charts. This evaluates how clearly each eye is seeing.

The top number in the fraction is the standard distance at which testing is done, 20 feet. The bottom number is the smallest letter size you were able to read. "Normal" vision is 20/20. This means that the test subject sees the same line of letters at 20 feet that a normal person sees at 20 feet. 20/40 vision means that the test subject sees clearly at 20 feet what a normal person can see clearly from 40 feet away.

3. Preliminary Testing - This may include evaluation of specific aspects of visual function and eye health such as depth perception, color vision, eye muscle movements, peripheral or side vision and the way your pupils respond to light.
4. Refraction – This is conducted to determine your glasses prescription needed to compensate for any refractive error (nearsightedness, farsightedness, or astigmatism).
5. Eye Health Evaluation – Measurement of pressure within the eye is performed. Normal eye pressures range from 10 to 21 mm Hg. Anyone with eye pressure greater than 22 mm Hg could be at risk of developing glaucoma, although many people with normal pressure also develop glaucoma. External examination of the eye is done with a slit lamp microscope using bright light and magnification. Dilation drops should be used in order to allow the doctor to have a thorough evaluation of the lens, retina and posterior section of the eye. This helps to better assess some ocular diseases, like glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.
6. Supplemental Testing – Additional testing may be needed based on the results of the previous tests to confirm or rule out possible problems, to clarify uncertain findings, or to provide a more in-depth assessment.

At the completion of the examination, any visual or eye health problems found will be addressed and treatment options will be explained.

Recommended Eye Exams ** could make this into a chart if needed to cut out words **

For healthy pediatric patients, it is recommended by the American Optometric Association (AOA) that a child should have their eyes examined at six months old, three years old, before the child starts grade school and every two years thereafter. Children considered to be at risk for eye or visual development problems will need to be evaluated more frequently.

For asymptomatic adult patients 18 to 60 years old, the AOA recommends eye exams every two years. Over the age of 61 years, yearly eye exams are strongly encouraged. Patients with systemic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, etc.), contact lens wearers, ocular diseases, etc. are followed more closely.