

Common Terms about Eyes and Vision

Below are some common terms patients often ask eye care physicians to define.

Myopia (nearsightedness) – A vision condition where close objects are seen clearly, but objects farther away are blurred. This affects about 30 percent of the US population. Common complaints with this condition are difficulty seeing the TV or the board at school.

Hyperopia (farsightedness) – A vision condition where distance objects typically are clear, but close objects are hard to focus. Common complaints with this condition are eye strain, fatigue and headaches after close work.

Astigmatism – A vision condition that causes blurred vision due either to the irregular shape of the cornea (the clear front cover of the eye) or sometimes the curvature of the lens (inside the eye). This condition can cause objects close and far away to be blurry. The specific cause is unknown. It can be hereditary and may increase or decrease over time.

Presbyopia – An age-related condition in which there is a gradual loss of the eye's ability to focus on near objects.

Progressive Lenses (no-line bifocals) – These are corrective lenses used to correct presbyopia. There is a progressive (or gradual) change in lens power, increasing towards the bottom, to help patients with reading closer material.

Transition Lenses (photochromic lenses) – These are lenses that darken when the patient goes outside (and are exposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiation). While inside, the lenses turn back to their clear state. These lenses do not darken much in cars because the windshield is made to block UV rays.

Cataracts – A cloudy or opaque area in the normally clear lens of the eye. Common complaints are blurred vision, color changes and glare with night driving.

Dry Eye – This is a condition in which there are insufficient tears to lubricate and nourish the eye. Common complaints are redness, irritation and watering eyes. When the eyes are dry, the eye tries to compensate for the dryness by over-producing tears, which causes eyes to water. Common treatment for this condition is artificial tears.

Floaters – The shadowy images that are seen moving in/across your field of vision caused by particles floating in the fluid that fills the inside of the eye. This is a common finding. Symptoms of concern are numerous floaters (appearing like many gnats flying around), flashes of light or a curtain/veil obstructing your vision. If any of those symptoms occur, you should contact your eye care physician immediately.

Glaucoma – A vision condition that can lead to progressive damage to the optic nerve. It is characterized by the loss of nerve tissue which results in peripheral vision loss. It is a symptomless disease and patients are often unaware of the peripheral vision loss glaucoma has caused until it is in advanced stages.

Diabetic Retinopathy – A condition seen in diabetic patients which can cause progressive damage (and possible vision loss) to the eye. Routine dilated eye exams are necessary to follow Diabetic patients. It is also important for Diabetic patients to keep up with their A1C reading to inform their eye care physician. This test measures the average blood glucose for the past three months.

Macular Degeneration – An eye disease that affects the macula, the center area of vision. This condition can cause central vision loss.

Stye (sty) – An infection of an oil gland in the eyelid.

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