

Regular Eye Exams:

Why are they important? What can you expect?

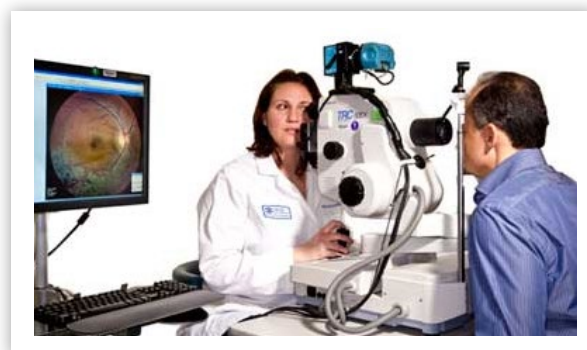
Why do you need regular eye exams?

To find out if you have glaucoma or not

- Many people who have glaucoma do not know it.
- Glaucoma usually does not cause pain. So you may not know you have it.
- Early and even sometimes advanced glaucoma might not change your central vision much.
- Glaucoma is a chronic disease that can worsen over time.

To check on your glaucoma

- It is not possible to monitor the disease on your own. You may not know your glaucoma is getting worse until it is severe.
- You usually cannot get back the vision you lose from glaucoma.
- Regular eye exams help doctors see if your glaucoma is controlled. Most glaucoma patients get eye exams every three to six months for their whole lives.
- Visits may be closer together if you have changes in your eye drops, have a laser procedure, or have surgery.
- Bringing a family member or friend to your eye exam may help in understanding all the tests and discussion you have with your glaucoma doctor.



What can you expect at glaucoma eye exams?

Vision and eye pressure

- You will have your vision checked by reading letters on an eye chart.
- You will usually get eye drops to numb your eyes. This will help check your eye pressure. When your eye pressure is checked, it is important to keep both eyes open without squeezing and to breathe normally. Your doctor may use a blue light that comes up close to your eye to measure your eye pressure.

Eye exam

- Your doctor will examine your eyes using a special microscope and lenses.
- You might get eye drops to dilate your eyes. This will make the black part of your eyes (your pupils) big for a few hours and make things brighter than usual. Sunglasses may help while you are waiting for your pupils to go back to their normal size.



Special testing

- Your doctor might get some pictures of your optic nerve to look at how healthy it is.
- Your eye exam could take a few hours, depending on how much testing you need, and how busy the clinic is.

What other kind of testing will be done?

Corneal thickness

- Your doctor may check the thickness of the clear part of the front of your eye called the cornea. The thickness of your cornea affects how your doctor interprets your eye pressure.

Visual field

- This tests your side and central vision.
- You look straight ahead at a point while your chin and head rest in a large bowl-like machine. You press a button every time you see a light flash, but do not move your eyes.
- Your doctor compares this test from one eye exam to the next. If the light needs to be brighter for you

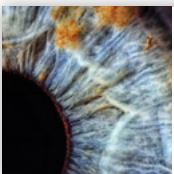
to see, this may mean that your glaucoma is getting worse and may need more treatment.

Optic nerve

- These tests check how much damage there is to your optic nerve from glaucoma.
- If the nerve is becoming too thin too fast, this may mean that your glaucoma is getting worse and may need more treatment.

What do I need to do in between eye exams with my glaucoma doctor?

- If your doctor has started you on eye drops, use your drops every day. This is usually the most important thing you can do each day to help your eyes. Forgetting drops can be dangerous and make your eye pressure higher. This will risk more damage to your optic nerve.
- Tell your doctor if you have changes in your vision, eye pain, eye redness, or other problems.



For a PDF version of this handout, visit www.bit.ly/AGS_PatientEd.

655 Beach Street, San Francisco, CA 94109 415.561.8587 ags@aaa.org

