Eye Care Benefits Toolkit:

Consumer Newsletter Articles & Poster

Article #1

*Protect Your Eye Health*

In a recent online survey of 1,000 American adults from the American Optometric Association, 93% of respondents said they value the health of their eyes as much as the health of their heart or lungs. Yet one in three doesn’t know how to take care of their eyes.

The first step towards protecting eye health is to understand that just because your eyes feel fine or don’t have any symptoms of trouble doesn’t necessarily mean they’re healthy. Many eye diseases don’t have warning signs and can only be detected through a comprehensive eye exam.

*Comprehensive eye exams are important*

This thorough exam, performed by an eye doctor, evaluates the health of your eyes, the quality of your vision and can also detect other eye and vision health problems. A comprehensive eye exam can also play a vital role in the early detection and management of many chronic conditions. For example, both diabetes and high blood pressure can damage small, delicate blood vessels in the eyes, causing leaks and swelling which can be seen during an eye exam.

If you’ve had a vision screening, keep in mind it’s not the same as a comprehensive eye exam. A vision screening is a brief test that is aimed at identifying undetected vision problems. Based on distance vision in each eye, a screening misses problems such farsightedness or astigmatism, and most all other health problems that can cause irreversible vison loss. No combination of screenings can provide the diagnostic capabilities of a comprehensive eye exam, which involves testing all aspects of vision and eye health.

*For e-version, add:* Click on [Comprehensive Eye & Vision Exam](https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/comprehensive-eye-and-vision-examination) for more information.

*Protecting eye health*

Making healthy lifestyle choices can help to keep your eyes healthy and protect them from harm. The National Eye Institute recommends taking these steps:

* Eat a healthy diet, including dark leafy greens and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon
* Wear protective eyewear such as goggles or safety glasses for sports and when in hazardous work environments
* Protect your eyes from the sun by wearing sunglasses that block 99% – 100% of UV-A and UV-B radiation
* Practice the 20-20-20 rule for digital eye strain that results from prolonged use of devices including computers, tablets and cell phones; every 20 minutes look at something 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds
* Know your family eye health history – many eye diseases run in families
* Get a comprehensive eye exam for yourself and your family members to detect problems early
* Quit smoking – it can increase your risk of some eye diseases and harm the optic nerve
* Get a dilated eye exam each year if you have diabetes to lower your risk of eye complications such as diabetic retinopathy by as much as 76%

*For e-version, add:* Click on [Vision Health](https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/keep-your-eyes-healthy) for more information from the National Eye Institute

Article #2

*Eye Exams & Eye Health*

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the number of people with vision impairment is expected to double by 2050. And the single best way to protect your eyes and keep them healthy is through a comprehensive eye exam. This type of exam, performed by an eye doctor, is the only way to check for common eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, age-related macular degeneration and the eye complications related to diabetes and many other chronic conditions, and detect them early when they are most treatable. A comprehensive eye exam often detects other health problems by allowing the doctor to view the health of the brain, nerves, blood and supportive tissues without use of x-rays, MRIs, CT scans or surgery.

The American Optometric Association (AOA) identifies the following as common examples of what could be found during a comprehensive eye exam:

*Patient history –* reviews overall health, family history of eye problems, any current eye issues and vision issues, medications, and work-related/environmental conditions that may be affecting vision

*Visual acuity* – measures how clearly each eye is seeing and often involves reading letters on a chart both near and at a distance; normal distance visual acuity is 20/20

*Preliminary tests* – these may include evaluation of depth perception, eye muscle movements, side vision, how your pupils respond to light and color vision

*Keratometry* – measures the clear outer surface of the eye, called the cornea and is used to fit contacts properly

*Refraction* – determines the lens power needed to correct for nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism

*Eye focusing, eye teaming, eye movement* – looks for problems related to keeping your eyes focused and/or difficulty using both eyes together

*Eye health evaluatio*n – assesses the inner structures of the eye and surrounding tissues; eye drops that dilate or widen the pupil are often used for this part of the exam

*Further testing* – helps to rule out problems and/or provide more information when a result is not clear, especially if the doctor finds any signs of an eye disease or other health problems

A comprehensive eye exam and vision exam is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent problems, detect problems early and protect your vision and your general health.

*For e-version, add:* Click on [Comprehensive Eye & Vision Exam](https://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/comprehensive-eye-and-vision-examination) for more information from the American Optometric Association

POSTER

7 Ways to Keep Your Eyes Healthy

1. Eat a Healthy Diet

Include dark leafy and fish high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon

2. Protect your eyes from injury

Wear protective eyewear, such as goggles or safety glasses, for sports and when in hazardous work environments; wear sunglasses that block 99% – 100% of UV-A and UV-B radiation

3. Know your Family Eye Health History

Many eye diseases are hereditary – they run in families

4. Get a Comprehensive Eye Exam

To detect and treat problems early

5. practice the 20-20-20 Rule

To avoid digital eye strain, every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet in front of you, for 20 seconds

6. Control your Diabetes

To lower your risk of diabetes-related eye complications like diabetic retinopathy

7. Quit Smoking

Smoking increases risk for cataracts, optic nerve damage and other eye problems

To find out more, visit the [Vision Health Initiative](https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/home/index.html) from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).