

From the Parish Nurse

Taking Care of Your Eyesight

First and foremost see your eye doctor if you have an eye infection or symptoms such as, loss of or blurred vision, halos effects, double vision, increased tearing redness, itching, swelling and irritation of the eye or eyelid.

Common Eye Problems

Presbyopia is simply the loss of ability to see close objects or small print. If you find your arms aren't long enough to hold the magazine and read it, or you have headaches or tired eyes whenever you read or do close work such as sewing or doing repairs requiring manipulating small parts e.g. screws, you may need a prescription for eyeglasses.

Tearing or having too many tears occurs with wind, temperature or light changes. Simply wearing sunglasses may be sufficient to solve the problem; however, this can come from having a condition known as dry eyes. Tearing may mean you have a blocked tear duct or an infection and therefore if it persists you should seek advice from your eye physician.

Eyelid problems can be treated with medications or surgery.

Conjunctivitis ("pink eye") is an inflammation of the tissue that lines the eyelids and covers the cornea. The symptoms of itching, burning, tearing or the constant feeling of a foreign object in the eye may be from an allergy or an infection. Pinkeye is an infectious eye disease that can spread from person to person. Always see a physician for treatment. Wash your hands whenever coming in contact with secretions from the eye, isolate all face clothes, towels and

materials used on the eye to prevent the spread to others.

Cataracts cause clouding of the lens and about half of Americans 65 or older have some degree of clouding of the lenses of the eye. After reaching age 75, as many as 70 percent of Americans have cataracts sufficient enough to impair vision. Although cataracts start slowly they eventually interfere with vision. In addition to age, diabetes, eye injury, previous eye surgery, excessive exposure to sunlight, smoking and a family history of cataracts all contribute to your chances of having a cataract.

Glaucoma is a condition when too much fluid accumulates inside the eye. The increased fluid exerts pressure on the optic nerve that transmits images to the brain. Therefore if you are age 45 or over and have a family history of glaucoma, you should have an eye examination every one to two years. Glaucoma cannot be prevented but with treatment it can be controlled! Eye drops, laser surgery or microsurgery can be used to treat the disease. Adherence to prescribed treatments is essential since over a period of time too much pressure can cause total blindness.

Floaters are tiny spots or specks that float in the eyes. These can be normal, but sometimes are a sign of more serious eye

problems such as a retinal detachment. A sudden change in the type or number of

spots or flashes requires an immediate evaluation by your eye physician.

Retinal disorders are the leading causes of blindness in the United States. The retina is like the film in a camera. It is where the visual image is recorded and passed to the brain.


Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) affects part of the retina known as the macula that records and allows you to have sharp central vision. Macular degeneration is the leading cause of severe vision loss in people over age 60. There are two types of AMD, but both require an eye doctor's treatment. There is currently no cure for macular degeneration, but treatments may prevent severe vision loss or slow the progression of the disease considerably. Several options are available, including: vitamins, laser therapy, drugs and low vision aids.

Help is Available

Low vision includes different degrees of sight loss from having blind spots, poor night vision, and problems with glare to almost a complete loss of sight. Visual aids can improve the quality of life for some individuals. Speak with your eye physician regarding his or her recommendations for your condition. Some options include: telescopic glasses, lenses that filter light, hand magnifiers, closed-circuit television, reading prisms, check guides, high contrast watches and clocks, large print books, enlarged number clocks, watches and phones and computer screen enhancers.

In conclusion, have regular eye exams every 1 to 2 years or more frequently as recommended for specific eye disorders or diseases. When outside wear sunglasses and a hat with a large brim. This protects your eyes from too much sunlight which can raise your risk of getting cataracts. If in doubt, always have symptoms of suspected eye disorders checked by your physician.

Additional information on services for the visually impaired can be obtained from: Visually Impaired-Nebraska Services 595-2041.

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