

# Preserving Your Hearing & Vision



It might be difficult to imagine what life would be like without vision or hearing. Yet millions of Americans experience some degree of vision impairment or hearing loss, with the odds of developing these conditions increasing with age.

The American Foundation for the Blind reports that about 32.2 million people who are 18 years or older experience a level of vision loss. Vision loss is defined as having trouble seeing even when wearing corrective lenses or being unable to see at all. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), about 15 percent of all Americans, or 37.5 million over the age of 18, report some degree of hearing loss. Problems with hearing or vision can affect you vocationally, socially, and emotionally.

While genetic disorders cause some cases of blindness and deafness, many hearing and vision loss cases may be preventable. Let's consider some steps you can take to minimize your chances of vision and hearing problems.

## Get Regular Eye Exams

Vision and hearing problems can occur gradually and go unnoticed until the problem has become advanced. Detecting and reporting any changes right away is important, as problems can be more easily treated in their early stages. The Mayo Clinic recommends the following guidelines for eye exams.

### Children Age 5 or Younger

An eye exam would be appropriate at any age if a parent or pediatrician notices a problem such as a lazy eye or crossed eyes. Otherwise, an exam is appropriate before a child enters first grade.

### School-Age Children & Adolescents

School-age children and adolescents not experiencing problems and with no risk factors should have a basic eye exam every year or every other year. An exam is appropriate at any time should changes or problems occur.

### Adults

With no symptoms or history of vision problems, adults in their 20s and 30s are advised to have their eyes checked every five to 10 years. Those between 40 and 54 should get exams every two to four years, while those between 55 and 64 should be checked every one to three years. It is recommended that adults 65 and older should have eye exams every year.

## Coming This Month:

Common Eye Problems  
..... November 13<sup>th</sup>

Common Ear Problems  
..... November 20<sup>th</sup>

Protecting Your Eyes & Ears  
..... November 27<sup>th</sup>

## Quarterly Video:

Self-Management for  
Chronic Diseases  
..... December

## Wellness Webinar:

Heart Health  
[Register Here](#)  
..... November 18<sup>th</sup>

For assistance on your health and wellness journey, contact [ConnectCare3](#) at [info@connectcare3.com](mailto:info@connectcare3.com) or by calling [877-223-2350](tel:877-223-2350).

ConnectCare3 is available to those on the health insurance plan. Talk to your benefit representative to see if your company is enrolled.



## Know Your Eye Care Providers

The three levels of eye care providers that patients see most often are: ophthalmologist, optometrist, and optician. What's the difference?

**Ophthalmologists** are highly trained and educated medical doctors. They diagnose and treat all eye diseases and are qualified to perform eye surgery. Some ophthalmologists specialize in a specific eye care area such as glaucoma, retina, neurology, or pediatric care.

An **optometrist** is not a medical doctor but receives a Doctor of Optometry (OD) degree after completing a college education and four years of optometry school. Optometrists are licensed to perform eye exams and vision tests. They can prescribe medications and corrective lenses, and they diagnose and treat vision problems. An optometrist often works in the same office as an ophthalmologist.

An **optician** provides eyeglasses or contacts for patients based on prescriptions provided by ophthalmologists and optometrists who have examined them. An optician does not perform eye exams or write prescriptions but is trained to confirm prescriptions and work with patients to provide appropriate corrective lenses.

You will need to see an ophthalmologist or optometrist for your regular eye exams. It is recommended that you see the same doctor so they can get to know you and any circumstances that could affect your vision or overall health. Because eye conditions such as cataracts, macular degeneration, and glaucoma occur more frequently with aging, yearly eye exams are highly recommended for older patients.

## Taking Care of Your Hearing

Most people are more likely to get their eyes checked than their ears, but hearing screenings and tests also are essential. It is recommended that adults get a baseline hearing test while in their early 20s and then every 10 years until age 50. Adults who are 50 or older should be tested every three years, or more often if problems occur. A hearing screening is less comprehensive than a hearing test but can help determine if further testing is warranted. You can request a screening from your primary care provider if you feel your hearing is deteriorating.

A loss of hearing can also be caused by impacted earwax, which may cause itching and ringing in your ears. Your doctor can advise you whether to remove the wax yourself or remove it for you.

Ear infections are a common cause of doctor visits for children, who are more prone to infection because of their ear anatomy. However, moisture or scratches inside the ear, sometimes caused by headphones or hearing aids, can also result in infection. You should consult your primary care provider if this is an area for concern. Symptoms of an ear infection can include pain, trouble hearing, problems with balance and fluid drainage.

Tinnitus is a condition that results in ringing or buzzing in your ears, and it can range from annoying to distressing. You should consult your doctor if you have this condition for more than a few days, as it usually is a symptom of another problem. Vertigo is another common ear-related problem that can cause dizziness, loss of balance, nausea, and other symptoms. Your doctor may be able to help resolve the issue or relieve symptoms until the problem resolves on its own.

There are other ear conditions that you can [read about here](#). Generally, you should consult your primary care provider for any sudden change in your hearing, significant pain in one or both ears, or sudden dizziness or problems with balance.