



A closer look at a vision exam



An annual eye exam is the best first step toward a lifetime of healthy vision. And, not only is a vision exam good for your eyes, it's also good for your overall health and wellness.

What to expect

A vision exam is more than just a screening. It also includes:

- **Glaucoma test.** A small puff of air is directed at the eye using a tonometer. The eye's resistance to the puff of air tests the pressure inside the eye. Higher pressure can be a sign of glaucoma.¹
- **Visual field screening.** The doctor may perform the test manually by asking you to indicate when you see their hand move into your peripheral vision, or by using an automated perimetry instrument with moving lights. This test checks your field of vision and can identify blind spots.
- **Refraction.** This is the "which looks better: 1 or 2" test most people associate with going to an eye doctor. A mask-like instrument (called a phoropter) is placed in front of your eyes to view an eye chart through a series of corrective lenses.
- **Slit lamp test.** Using a microscope-like device, an eye doctor can examine eyelids, tears, cornea, iris, and lenses. A dye can also be applied to eyes to help reveal damaged cells.
- **Retinal viewing test.** The eyes are dilated using drops and the doctor shines a beam of light through the expanded pupil to examine the retina, vessels, and the other structures at the back of the eye. These tests and other types of retinal imaging can help identify early stages of non-vision related diseases.²



Routine vision exams can detect issues with your sight, as well as eye disorders and early signs of other serious health conditions, such as **diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.**³



Understanding the results

A vision exam determines if you need a vision correction. If so, the doctor will provide lens prescriptions for either glasses or contacts. The eye doctor may also discuss refractive surgery options.

The exam also reveals any eye health concerns such as cataracts, glaucoma, or retinal disorders, such as macular degeneration or diabetic retinopathy. Early detection of these disorders is key to stopping their progression and preserving vision.⁴

1. Mayo Clinic. "Glaucoma." November 5, 2024. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/glaucoma/symptoms-causes/syc-20372839>.

2. National Eye Institute. "Get a Dilated Eye Exam." December 5, 2024. <https://www.nei.nih.gov/learn-about-eye-health/healthy-vision/get-dilated-eye-exam>.

3. American Academy of Ophthalmology. "20 Surprising Health Problems an Eye Exam Can Catch." April 17, 2025. <https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/surprising-health-conditions-eye-exam-detects>.

4. Avoid Vision Loss By Catching Conditions Early," yoursightmatters.com, accessed August 2022.

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