

## VISION

### WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I AND MY FAMILY BE ASKING?

- Have there been any recent changes in my vision?
  - Have these changes been for both eyes?
  - Have these changes been for my center vision or my outer vision?
  - Do I find it more difficult to read?
  - Have I had any recent driving accidents or incidents?
  - Am I managing my high blood pressure well?
  - Am I managing my diabetes well?
  - Have I been having really bad headaches and vision changes?
  - Have I had my vision checked recently?
  - Am I using the correct prescription glasses?
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### WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE FOR THIS AGENDA?

- Eat a healthy diet full of vitamin A. This can help with our night-time vision. You likely do not need to take supplements
  - Try to avoid driving in the dark if it is difficult for you or if you have had any driving incidents. Consider getting your driving skills tested
  - Have your vision assessed if you're noticing any changes to your vision even if there is no pain
  - Make sure to maintain good control of your blood pressure, diabetes, and other health conditions
  - Wear your correct prescription for glasses while reading and driving to avoid straining your eyes
  - Treat dry eyes with artificial tears you can apply especially if you live in dry or cold areas
  - Make sure to go to the emergency department or talk to your doctor if you have any of the alarming features mentioned above
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## WHAT IS VISION?

- Vision is the ability of sight and how we see
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## WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR VISION WHEN WE AGE?

- As we age, the parts of the eye can change
  - Your eyelids can also become more relaxed or “droopy”
  - Night vision is reduced and eyes can become drier
  - Older adults are at an increased risk of getting eye diseases such as glaucoma or cataracts
  - These changes can make driving and doing our daily tasks more difficult
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## OUR EYES AND VISION CAN CHANGE AS WE AGE CAUSING DRY EYES, DROOPY EYELIDS, AND INCREASED EYE DISEASES

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## WHAT IS “AGING SIGHT”?

- Aging sight is called “presbyopia” in the medical world
  - It is not the same as being far or near-sighted but it is still a problem that changes how well we see
  - It occurs when our eye muscles become less powerful at bringing things into focus. This means we can no longer focus on objects when they are an arm’s length or closer
  - This is because the lens loses its elasticity
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## WILL VISION GET WORSE AS WE AGE NO MATTER WHAT?

- Not necessarily
- Certain types of vision problems can improve as we age
- One of these is being near-sighted or having a hard time seeing things that are far away

- 40% of adults aged 20 to 60 have this problem but only about 20% of adults older than 60 have this
  - However, far-sightedness or trouble seeing things close to you does get worse with aging
  - This is why you will see more older adults with reading glasses
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**AS WE AGE THE EYE LENS CAN LOSE ITS ELASTICITY. AGING DOES NOT HAVE TO MEAN OUR VISION WILL GET WORSE**

**MANY OLDER ADULTS NEED READING GLASSES BECAUSE THEY HAVE PROBLEMS WITH NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS**

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**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT I KEEP MY VISION HEALTHY?**

- In older adults, poor sight has led to people having lower health and quality of life
  - It has also been proven to increase the risk of falls, trouble with your thinking, and depression
  - If you are having any of these issues, refer to your doctor for a vision test
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**WHAT ARE ALARMING SYMPTOMS I SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR WITH MY VISION?**

- Sometimes changes in our ability to see are not just a normal part of aging
- Sometimes they can mean something more serious is happening
- Examples of alarming symptoms are:
  - If you find your vision becoming worse quickly
  - If your vision is going dark or you cannot see from certain parts of your eyes even if there is no pain
  - If you find yourself getting headaches that make your vision blurry
- You should see your doctor if you have these symptoms or you're worried about your vision

**POOR VISION CAN LEAD TO INCREASED RISK OF DEPRESSION, FALLS, CONFUSION, AND WORSE QUALITY OF LIFE**

**ALARMING VISION SYMPTOMS ARE SUDDEN LOSS OF VISION, COMBINED WITH HEADACHES, OR SEVERE PAIN**

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### **WHAT ARE SOME CAUSES OF EYE OR VISION PROBLEMS IN OLDER ADULTS?**

- Sometimes we get scary changes in our vision like vision loss
  - This could be from eye disease but can also be from something else going on in the body
  - Eye infections or having any direct injury to the eye from trauma can cause problems with our vision
  - Diseases like high blood pressure, poorly controlled diabetes, a blood clotting problem, or stroke can all affect how we see
  - Some immune and inflammatory diseases can also cause vision problems
  - This is why it is important to maintain all parts of our health to keep our eyes healthy
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### **HOW DOES DIABETES AFFECT MY VISION?**

- Diabetics have too much sugar (glucose) in their system that can cause damage to a number of organs
  - The eyes are one of these organs as high sugar makes the blood supply to the eyes worse
  - Good sugar control and treating diabetes can greatly reduce this risk
  - Some may need laser eye surgery for poor vision from diabetes
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**THERE ARE MANY DISEASES THAT CAN AFFECT OUR VISION SUCH AS DIABETES AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE YOUR LONG-TERM (CHRONIC) ILLNESSES UNDER GOOD CONTROL TO KEEP YOUR VISION HEALTHY**

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**WHAT IS GLAUCOMA AND HOW IS IT TREATED?**

- Our eyes have fluid in them. This fluid creates an amount of pressure
  - If the fluid or pressure becomes too high for whatever reason, it can cause damage to the nerves in the eyes
  - This increase in fluid pressure in the eyes is called glaucoma
  - Glaucoma can also cause headaches, seeing halos, nausea, and eye pain
  - There are medications that can treat glaucoma
  - Surgery might be needed too
  - If left untreated, glaucoma can cause blindness
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**WHAT ARE CATARACTS AND HOW ARE THEY TREATED?**

- Cataracts are probably something you have heard of before
  - It is a “clouding” of the lens of the eye. It can make your vision more blurry or dull
  - It can also cause problems with how you see color or reading
  - It can also cause you to have some trouble with driving and glare coming off of headlights
  - The main treatment for cataracts is surgery that is very common and well-tolerated. The surgery entails removing your cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial one
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**GLAUCOMA IS INCREASED FLUID PRESSURE IN THE EYE. CATARACTS ARE A CLOUDINESS OF THE EYE LENS. BOTH CAN CAUSE BLINDNESS AND CAN BE TREATED WITH MEDICATION OR SURGERY**

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**WHAT IS ARMD AND HOW IS IT TREATED?**

- ARMD is the name of a very common eye disease in older adults
  - ARMD stands for “Age-related Macular Degeneration”
  - The macula is the center part of your inner eye
  - That is why ARMD causes loss of your central vision, not outer vision
  - ARMD is usually painless
  - Age and smoking are the biggest risk factors
  - ARMD can be treated with medications to improve the blood supply to the eye
  - Some procedures can also help
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**HOW OFTEN SHOULD I GET MY VISION CHECKED?**

- There are no specific recommendations of how often you should get your eyes checked
  - You should get them checked if you think there is a change in your vision
  - Talk to your doctor if you have any vision symptoms you’re worried about even if there is no pain
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**ARMD IS THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF BLINDNESS IN OLDER ADULTS. IT IS USUALLY PAINLESS AND AFFECTS THE CENTER PART OF YOUR VISION**

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**HEARING**

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**WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD I AND MY FAMILY BE ASKING?**

- Do I hear as well as I used to or has my hearing been getting worse?
- Has my hearing been getting worse over time or was it very sudden?

- Am I having a constant ringing or a constant sound in my ears making it hard to hear?
  - Am I feeling dizzy like the room is spinning?
  - Is my hearing problem the same on both sides or worse on one side?
  - Is my hearing trouble impacting my relationships with others? Is my mood worse because of my hearing loss?
  - What kinds of sounds and things do I have a hard time hearing?
  - Could I benefit from a hearing aid or assistive listening device?
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### WHAT ACTIONS CAN I TAKE FOR THIS AGENDA?

- Talk to your doctor if you notice your hearing changing
  - Stop using Q-tips to manage my ear wax
  - Speak to your doctor if you have ringing in your ears or are feeling imbalanced
  - Try to be open-minded about hearing aids and assistive listening devices
  - Ask others to speak up or deepen their voice if it will help you hear
  - Stop smoking to reduce your risk of hearing loss
  - Reaching out for help if your hearing loss is making you feel isolated, depressed, or poorly about yourself
  - Make sure your other medical conditions like diabetes are managed well
  - Reviewing your medications with your doctor to see if any of them could be affecting your hearing
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### WHAT IS HEARING LOSS?

- Hearing loss is a large term that can include short-term or long-term problems with hearing
  - These problems can be progressive over time or can be quite sudden when something else is going on
  - Older adults are at increased risk of hearing loss especially for “high frequency” noises
  - High-frequency noises are noises such as birds chirping, whistles, or children voices
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### **WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF HEARING LOSS?**

- There are many causes of hearing loss
  - Hearing loss is divided into two types to understand what is happening
  - In one type the actual nerves, small bones in the ear, or specific hair cells that conduct the sound to the brain stop working
  - This is called “sensori-neural.” That is a large word we can break down into “sensori” like sensory or do with our senses and “neural” like nerve or having to do with the brain
  - The other type of hearing loss is called “conductive” loss
  - This kind is anything that prevents the sound to get into the ear correctly
  - It can be caused by things like too much ear wax or fluid in the ear
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### **HEARING LOSS CAN BE CAUSED BY NERVE PROBLEMS (SENSORI-NEURAL)**

### **ANOTHER CAUSE IS FROM SOUND GOING INTO THE EAR PROBLEMS (CONDUCTIVE)**

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### **WHAT IS THE NORMAL PATTERN OF AGE-RELATED HEARING LOSS?**

- The normal type of hearing loss that happens with age affects both ears the same way
  - These changes take time to get worse over years. They are not sudden
  - If you have a sudden change in your hearing or affecting one ear more than the other, you should speak to your doctor
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### **HOW COMMON IS IT TO HAVE HEARING LOSS?**

- More than half of adults by age 75 have age-related hearing loss
  - This increases to most adults over 80 and nearly all adults over 90
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**WHAT KINDS OF THINGS PUT ME AT HIGHER RISK FOR HEARING LOSS AS I AGE?**

- People exposed to loud noises have an increased risk for hearing loss
  - Other less obvious risks include being of white race and smoking
  - Some medication side effects can also cause hearing loss
  - Many diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure can also do this
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**ALMOST HALF OF OLDER ADULTS OVER AGE 75 HAVE HEARING LOSS. NORMAL HEARING LOSS IS USUALLY IN BOTH EARS AND NOT PAINFUL BUT SHOULD BE TREATED**

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**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KEEP HEARING WORKING WELL?**

- Having poor hearing can negatively impact people in a lot of ways
  - It can result in low self-esteem, isolation, and depression
  - It can worsen the quality of life
  - It can be difficult for people to communicate if they cannot hear
  - Poor hearing can also contribute to developing dementia. Refer to our in our "[mind](#)" agenda for more details
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**SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR IF I THINK I AM HAVING HEARING LOSS?**

- We mentioned that hearing loss can be a normal part of aging
  - But that does not mean you should not see your doctor about it
  - Not being able to hear can negatively affect us in many ways
  - Seeing your doctor about your hearing can help you make sure it is as best as possible
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**HEARING LOSS CAN WORSEN ISOLATION, LOW SELF-ESTEEM, DEPRESSION, QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DEMENTIA**

### **WHAT ARE OTHER SYMPTOMS I SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR WITH MY HEARING?**

- Sometimes other symptoms can occur along with hearing loss. One of these is called “tinnitus” which is having a steady sound in the ears at all times
  - Usually, people feel like there is a ringing or a static sound that they can’t get rid of
  - Another common symptom is “vertigo”. This means feeling like you or the room is spinning when you move
  - This can cause imbalance and increase the risk of falling. It is important to mention these symptoms to your doctor
  - Refer to the “falling” agenda for more details
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### **WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT THE WAX IN MY EARS?**

- Ear wax is a common and normal thing to have. However, you should not be using Q-tips in your ears
  - Q-tips can push the wax into your ears further and cause worse hearing problems. Also, there is a chance a Q-tip can cause injury to your eardrum and worsen hearing
  - If you have wax build up over time you can go to your doctor to ask them for treatment
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### **TINNITUS AND VERTIGO ARE SYMPTOMS TO LOOK OUT FOR WITH HEARING LOSS. THESE CAN INCREASE YOUR RISK FOR IMBALANCE AND FALLS**

### **WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP IMPROVE MY HEARING LOSS?**

- Hearing aids are a common solution to hearing loss for older adults
- You can sometimes have a trial period with a hearing aid to see if it works for you
- If uncomfortable, the size and settings can be adjusted. Some are covered by insurance and some are not

- Other things include assistive listening devices like special telephones that can help relay the sound directly to the ear
  - There are other medical treatments like implants and rehabilitation that your doctor may suggest too
  - Audiologists are specialists for hearing and may be able to help diagnose and treat hearing loss
  - ENT physicians are surgical ear specialists that diagnose and treat many ear diseases
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### **WHAT ARE IMPORTANT TIPS FOR HEARING AIDS?**

- Making sure to maintain your hearing aid is very important
  - Store them in the same place safely
  - You should clean them regularly
  - Often they can run out of batteries and we don't know or notice
  - Following proper instructions for use is also important
  - Using the hearing aids as much as possible and making sure they fit in your ears correctly
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### **HEARING AIDS ARE COMMON AND VERY HELPFUL DEVICES FOR OLDER ADULT HEARING LOSS THAT ARE UNDER-APPRECIATED AND SHOULD BE USED MORE**

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