

COMMON EYE CONDITIONS

Floaters and Spots

It is not uncommon for healthy eyes to notice spots or clouds that pass across your field of vision. These are called floaters and they may take a number of shapes and are most apparent when looking at a solid light-colored background. They are the shadow of small clots of gel in the vitreous fluid that composes the inside of the eye. While they may be harmless and indicate no internal problems, floaters and spots may also indicate a larger health issue, such as a detached retina. An Optometrists can help you determine if your floaters and spots are of the normal, harmless variety or if they are indicative of a more serious health problem.

If you experience jagged lines in your vision (similar to heat waves) occurring in both eyes for up to 20 minutes, you may be experiencing a spasm of vessels in the brain, more commonly known as a migraine. Often these visual disturbances are followed by severe migraine headaches, but they can also occur without the headache and are called ophthalmic/ocular migraines. Typically, spots and floaters are harmless and will disappear over time. If they become more than just a nuisance and begin to compromise vision, other treatments are available. Contact our practice to learn more.

Dry Eyes

While dry eyes may seem like a minor inconvenience, anyone who is forced to deal with it on a continuous bases will tell you that frequently dealing with dry eyes can become more than just a nuisance. Not only do dry eyes create a constant distraction and irritation, the effects of the dryness and the rubbing that becomes inevitable can leave you looking less than your best. To keep yourself at the top of your game professionally and personally, it is wise to take action to alleviate your dry eyes.

The causes of dry eyes vary and it can sometimes be difficult to determine the source of the problem. Typically allergies or sensitivities to pollens, pet dander, dust mites, or the perfumes and scents used in many products are the culprits. One way to determine the cause of dry eyes is to reduce or eliminate potential allergens and take careful note of what triggers the symptoms. While there are many over the counter medications and eye drops that can be used to combat dry eyes, your optometrist will be able to provide you with a personalized approach to your problem and offer an individualized solution.

Allergic Reactions

Allergies can make life miserable. While there are many symptoms of allergies, often coming into contact with allergens can immediately and severely affect your eyes. In addition to the sneezing, coughing, itching, and sinus problems that allergies can cause, you may also find your eyes affected. Signs of allergies in the eyes are tearing, itching and swelling, often accompanied by red around and in the eyes. If this sounds like you when you are in contact with pollen, pet dander, mold or dust, chances are you are wondering what you can do to alleviate your symptoms.

After you have identified that you suffer from allergies, make an attempt to pinpoint what triggers your allergic reactions. Sometimes you can learn what you need to simply by paying attention or you may also visit a doctor for an allergy test that will identify your sensitivities. Ideally you would just be able to stay away from the problem and no longer be forced to endure the symptoms. Unfortunately this is not always possible, either because you can't isolate the problem or it is impossible for you to stay away from the allergens that most affect you. If you have reached this point and are in need of assistance finding treatment methods, contact our office today to consult with an experienced professional.

Retinal Detachment

If you are experiencing problems with your vision, it is likely that you are feeling some stress and anxiety about what will happen in the future. Our staff is here to help you by providing a comprehensive exam, fact-based diagnosis and treatment options that will help you manage or eliminate the problem.

We often see clients who are experiencing blurred vision, shadows moving down from the top to the bottom of the eye, or floaters and spots in their field of vision. While these visual impairments may be nothing serious and typically will go away on their own, it is important to realize that they may also be a warning sign of the retinal detachment.

Retinal detachment can be a serious medical issue that can jeopardize your sight. It occurs when the retina becomes detached to the supportive tissues beneath it and when these layers are not properly attached to one another, sight loss occurs. While this issue is not painful, total vision loss can occur if the retina is completely detached.

Fortunately if the problem is treated quickly vision may be restored. If you are concerned that you may have retinal detachment, please contact us today for an eye exam with our optometrist.

Presbyopia

Do you often hold your reading materials at an arm's length so you are able to see what you are reading more clearly? If so, this can be a sign of presbyopia. Characterized as blurred vision that occurs in the near sight, presbyopia commonly strikes in middle age. Most often, sufferers will notice difficulty with close tasks such as sewing, reading or working on a computer.

Unlike other vision problems that are caused by the shape of the eye, disease or trauma, presbyopia is a natural part of aging. Thought to stem from rigidity in the lens of the eye, presbyopia can affect you even if you have a history of perfect vision.

Fortunately, there are eyeglasses and contact lenses made especially for individuals who suffer from this problem. Progressive addition lenses, or bifocals, are most commonly prescribed to correct presbyopia. Reading glasses may also help, as will multifocal contact lenses. Some people prefer to utilize contact lenses that are known as monovision, in which one lens is prescribed for distance and the other for near vision.

If you are finding it difficult to read at a close distance, contact us to schedule an eye exam and find the right corrective solution for you.

Astigmatism

Characterized by a slight blurring of the vision or headaches or eyestrain, astigmatism is the most common vision problem. It is typically caused by an irregularity in the shape of the cornea; often the cornea will have an oblong or oval shape rather than the spherical shape of a healthy eye. This condition can be hereditary, but the problem may worsen as part of the aging process. Additionally, astigmatism can be caused by a trauma that scars or otherwise alters the shape of the eye.

If you think you may have astigmatism, it is important to utilize the skills and experience of a reputable eye care professional. A simple, non-invasive eye examination will provide the information that is needed to correct the problem with prescription glasses or contact lenses. While years ago it was believed that contact lenses were unable to correct astigmatism, there are now toric contact lenses available to do the job.

Hyperopia (Farsightedness)

If you suffer from hyperopia, more commonly known as farsightedness, you are not alone. Nearly one fourth of the population is afflicted with this condition and are able to see well at a distance, but find it difficult to see close objects clearly.

If you have never been diagnosed with this condition, some signs and symptoms include headache or eyestrain and you may often find yourself squinting or noticing fatigue when working on a computer or reading. If you have previously been diagnosed with hyperopia and are experiencing these symptoms, it is possible that your condition has worsened and you may need to have your eyes re-evaluated to correct the problem.

Caused by a shortened eyeball, vision in a person with hyperopia is distorted when light rays enter the eye and focus behind the retina, rather than directly on it as intended. The condition may be effectively treated with glasses or contact lenses that alter the trajectory of the light as it travels into the eye. If you are suffering from farsightedness, please contact us today to schedule an eye exam and learn which treatment option will work best for you.

Myopia (Nearsightedness)

Known more commonly as nearsightedness, myopia affects about a third of the population. It is characterized by difficulty seeing objects at a distance while experiencing ease seeing up close.

If you are suffering from this condition you may find yourself squinting or straining while driving. This is a condition that typically worsens over time, so if you have previously been diagnosed and are experiencing these symptoms, you may need to have another eye examination to determine if you need an updated prescription.

Myopia is caused by an elongated eyeball, which causes light rays to contact the retina in the front rather than on its surface as it does in a healthy eye. Treatment for this condition is effective with glasses, contact lenses and lasik surgery.

If you have been diagnosed with myopia and are once again experiencing symptoms or feel that you may have this condition, our optometrists are here to assist you with a comprehensive eye care and effective treatment options.

Glaucoma

Often characterized by a troublesome buildup of pressure within the eye, glaucoma can cause a decreased ability to see or total loss of vision. The dangerous pressure that builds in the eye does not always cause any signs or symptoms and can progress without notice until the optic nerve is damaged, often irreparably. The damage to the optic nerve leads to varying degrees of permanent vision loss and other symptoms, from blurred vision to halos around lights to intense eye pain, nausea and finally, total blindness. Glaucoma affects millions, particularly African Americans, and is the second leading cause of blindness in the United States.

The potential of glaucoma to rob patients of their sight is one of the most cited reasons to regularly visit your eye care professional. The use of a tonometer during routine eye exams allows your eye care professional to monitor the pressure within the eye and catch increased pressure before damage occurs. When dangerous levels of pressure are detected, treatments can include medication or glaucoma surgery.

Cataracts

As we age, the lenses of our eyes begin to cloud over and form cataracts. Located behind the iris and the pupil, the lens is extremely vital to our ability to see. Because our natural lenses function like the lens of a camera, they are responsible for focusing light toward the retina and adjusting focus when we are using our vision to see near and far. The clouding of this lens occurs when the protein of the lens begins to clump together. These clouds or cataracts cause vision to be blurred and impaired to varying degrees.

Beyond the slight clouding that you may see if you have a cataract, other symptoms include having difficulty driving at night due to an increased glare from lights. Also indoor lighting may seem excessively bright and to project a greater glare. Once symptoms occur there are a variety of treatment options, depending on the type of cataract and its stage. These treatments include glasses, bifocals, magnification, visual aids and surgery. If you have cataracts or are experiencing any symptoms that concern you, contact our office to see a highly trained professional.

Styes

Styes are quite common as they are caused by the staphylococcal bacteria, found on the skin of the eyelid. An infected gland, a styne looks like a small pimple and can be located on the inside or outside of the eyelid. While they aren't usually harmful to your vision, they may cause discomfort and are often unsightly. Characterized by pain, tenderness, redness and swelling in the affected area, a styne can also affect the whole eye by causing swelling throughout the entire eyelid.

Subconjunctival Hemorrhage

If you have noticed excessive and unusual eye redness in the whites of your eye or eyes, you may be suffering from a subconjunctival hemorrhage. This condition is caused by a rupture of the small blood vessels that reside just beneath the tissue around the whites of the eye. When the vessels rupture, the whites become covered in a reddish tint.

Common causes of subconjunctival hemorrhage include:

- Trauma to the eye
- Blood clotting disorders
- Regular use of blood thinners like aspirin and coumadin
- A sudden surge in blood pressure due to excessive effort from lifting heavy objects, coughing, sneezing and the like

While subconjunctival hemorrhages do not result in pain or loss of vision, the unsightly appearance often prompts sufferers to seek out treatment. While no treatment is available to heal the rupture that causes the redness, eye drops can be used as artificial lubricants to soothe the eyes and lessen the red appearance of the whites of the eyes. Rubbing or touching the eyes can contribute to the problem and extend the healing time. Typically subconjunctival hemorrhages will heal within a week or ten days.

If you are concerned about redness in your eyes and believe you may have a subconjunctival hemorrhage, contact us to learn more about the condition and treatment options.

Macular Degeneration

Often referred to as AMD or ARMD (for age-related macular degeneration), macular degeneration is a relatively common problem for people as they age. The macula is a part of the retina. A healthy macula is necessary for centralized vision and focus necessary to effectively read or drive. When the macula begins to deteriorate, central vision loss can occur.

There are two types of macular degeneration, wet and dry. Wet macular degeneration is neovascular, meaning that blood vessels begin to grow in an area where they should not. Wet AMD may lead to blind spots in the central vision. Dry macular degeneration is non-neovascular and is characterized by a thinning of the macula and accumulation of pigment in the macula. While dry macular degeneration is not as severe as wet macular degeneration, it can lead to central vision loss. Dry AMD may lead to wet AMD (and does in about 10% of cases).

Although macular degeneration cannot currently be cured, treatment options do exist. Treatments are aimed at slowing the progression of the disease and improving vision when possible.

If you are experiencing blurring or loss of central vision in either eye, contact our office to visit with an experienced eye care professional today.

