

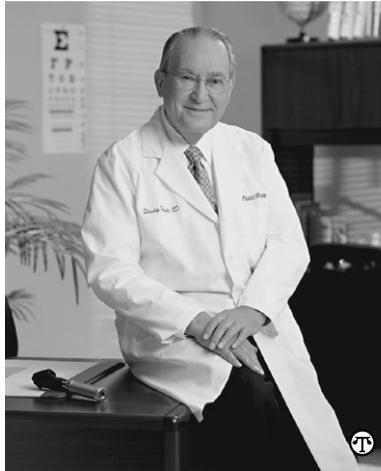
Ask Dr. Pearle...

(NAPSA)—Regular visits to your eye doctor are so important, for your vision and for your overall health. It's also important to understand the broad spectrum of eye health issues that affect you and your family. Here are some of the many questions patients ask me and the independent doctors of optometry affiliated with Pearle Vision.

Q. I'm 44 years old and for the first time I'm having trouble focusing, especially on objects that are close up. Does this mean I need glasses?

A. You may have a condition called presbyopia. Presbyopia is the gradual decline in the ability to focus on close objects or to see small print. Regardless of your prior vision correction needs, presbyopia is considered a normal and virtually inevitable part of the aging process. Often beginning in their 40s, people experience blurred vision when viewing objects up close—such as when reading, sewing, or working at a computer. If you find yourself holding items at arm's length in order to focus, it's time to see an optometrist—especially if you haven't had an eye exam recently.

Reading glasses, contact lenses or eyeglasses can usually correct the problem. Annual eye exams by a doctor of optometry are essential to maintaining optimum vision



Dr. Pearle

during one's lifetime. Routine eye examinations offer the best hope for early detection of conditions such as presbyopia, and to rule out eye diseases such as glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, all of which seriously affect vision.

If you're in need of an eye exam, new eyeglasses or contact lenses, the eyecare professionals at Pearle Vision recommend scheduling an appointment before the end of the year. Many vision insurance benefits expire at the end of the calendar year. Therefore it's wise to take advantage of your benefits before time runs out.

Q: I believe that I have vision insurance benefits through my employer. How can I best take advantage of the vision services that are available?

A: A variety of optical services may be available to you and your family at a substantial discount or even paid for through your current health plan or employer group.

To find out if you're eligible for eyecare, start by reviewing your employee benefits package. If you can't find the information you're looking for, contact your human resources department or call your health plan's member services department. If you are eligible for vision benefits, call your eyecare provider in advance to schedule an appointment and to confirm the provider's participation.

Pearle Vision provides comprehensive vision care, including eye exams by independent doctors of optometry. Regular eye exams are often covered under numerous health care benefits packages. Keep in mind that many vision benefits expire at year-end.

Pearle Vision accepts many vision insurance health plans and offers discounts to most affiliated membership associations such as AARP.

For more information visit www.pearlevision.com or call 1-800-YES-EYES.