

Eye on Health

Don't Lose Sight Of Your Eye Health

(NAPSA)—To many people, good vision means good eye health. But that is not necessarily true. A comprehensive eye examination can catch problems with your eyes well before your vision is affected.

Aaron Weingeist, M.D., an ophthalmologist in Seattle and a clinical correspondent for the American Academy of Ophthalmology, regularly sees patients who thought they were perfectly fine. “As an example, an otherwise healthy, 38-year-old man came to see me complaining of mild blurriness in his vision,” he said. “He had nearly perfect vision, but after dilating his eyes, I found severe hemorrhages and swollen spots in both eyes. Although he had a family history of diabetes and had similar symptoms five years ago, he never had a follow-up examination or further testing. He is now coping with diabetic retinopathy but was very thankful to finally be diagnosed.”

Through its EyeSmart campaign, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the world's largest association of eye physicians and surgeons, reminds otherwise healthy Americans of the importance of getting a baseline eye disease screening at age 40—the age when early signs of eye disease and changes in vision may first be noted. For individuals at any age with symptoms of, or at risk for, eye disease (such as those with a family history of eye disease, diabetes or high blood pressure), the Academy recommends that they see their ophthalmologist to determine how frequently their eyes should be examined. Based on the results of the initial screening, an ophthalmologist will prescribe the necessary intervals for follow-up exams.

“Eye diseases become more

common as we age. By the time you hit 40 years old, diseases such as primary open-angle glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy can begin to show early signs. Often, patients with eye diseases do not have recognizable symptoms until the diseases are quite advanced,” said Dr. Weingeist. “Vision problems can be prevented only if identified and treated early.”

The American Academy of Ophthalmology reminds Americans of the importance of a baseline eye exam 

By 2020, 43 million Americans will be at risk for significant vision loss or blindness from age-related eye diseases such as cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration, an increase of more than 50 percent over the current number of Americans with these diseases. Despite the statistics, many Americans are more concerned about weight gain or back pain than they are of vision loss.

“Unfortunately, millions of people will suffer significant vision loss and blindness because they don't know their risks,” said Dr. Weingeist. “I can't stress enough the importance of getting your baseline exam, because knowing your risks can save your sight.”

Eye health care is provided by the “three O's”—opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all, eye diseases and injuries, and perform eye surgery.

Learn about eye diseases, your risk factors and the names of eye M.D.s in the area by visiting www.GetEyeSmart.org.