

A Portrait of Eye Health: Eye Exams Key for the Whole Family

(NAPSA)—A recent study showed that 47 percent of Americans 45 and above feared losing their sight more than mental or emotional illness, loss of a limb or loss of hearing. This same group would miss seeing their children or grandchildren more than driving, reading or watching television. Yet, many of the diseases that have caused legal blindness for more than 900,000 adults over the age of 40 could have been prevented by regular check-ups. In order to better prevent common eye diseases, every family member should have a preventative eye health check-up that starts early.

Eye Exams for Children:

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), nearly 80 percent of preschoolers have not had their eyes screened for eye diseases such as strabismus (crossed eyes), amblyopia (lazy eye), and refractive errors (nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism). Nearly one-quarter of school-aged children have vision problems. With these statistics in mind, the AAO recommends a child should receive at least one complete eye exam by the age of five.

Eye Exams for Young and Middle Age Adults:

Often, younger adults feel that eye problems are not a concern for them. However, vision naturally changes as we get older. Whether it's difficult to read the computer screen or see road signs, many eye problems at this age require prescription glasses or contact lenses. The number of eye doctor visits during this time generally depends on the health of your eyes and your family history of eye diseases. Once you have your eyes examined for the first time, your doctor will recommend how often you should be examined.

Eye Exams for Older Adults:

Due to an increased risk of age-



related eye diseases, such as macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma, adults over the age of 50 are encouraged to have yearly eye exams. In fact, macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness for people over 50, can cause very quick loss of central vision, which impedes daily activities such as recognizing faces, walking, driving a car, reading and watching television. Yet two-thirds of Americans are not familiar with this disease. In the United States alone, there are more than 13 million cases of macular degeneration—that's more cases than cataracts or glaucoma. Many of these diseases are preventable or at least treatable if caught early.

Make sure you and your family keep your vision healthy at every age by scheduling the recommended number of eye exams. If someone you love is over 50, remind them to schedule a yearly eye exam for the best preventative care against age-related eye diseases. Remember it's never too early to teach your family about safe, healthy eye care.

For more information about macular degeneration or to receive an eye exam pledge card, visit www.amdfacts.com or call 800-AMD-4636. For more information on other eye diseases or conditions visit www.novartisophthalmics.com/us.

Editor's Note: October is Family Eye Care Month, but this information is useful at any time.