

A close-up photograph of a man's right eye, which is green. The eye is looking slightly to the left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown. The image is framed by a yellow border at the top and bottom.

Open Your Eyes

A blue abstract background with a pattern of white dots and lines, resembling a globe or a network. The text is overlaid on this background.

Protect Your Vision... and Your Health

MHN Men's Health Network™
www.menshealthnetwork.org

(A part of the Blueprint for Men's Health series of publications.)

Staying on top of your eye health is important at all ages.

Take a look at this booklet to learn more about...

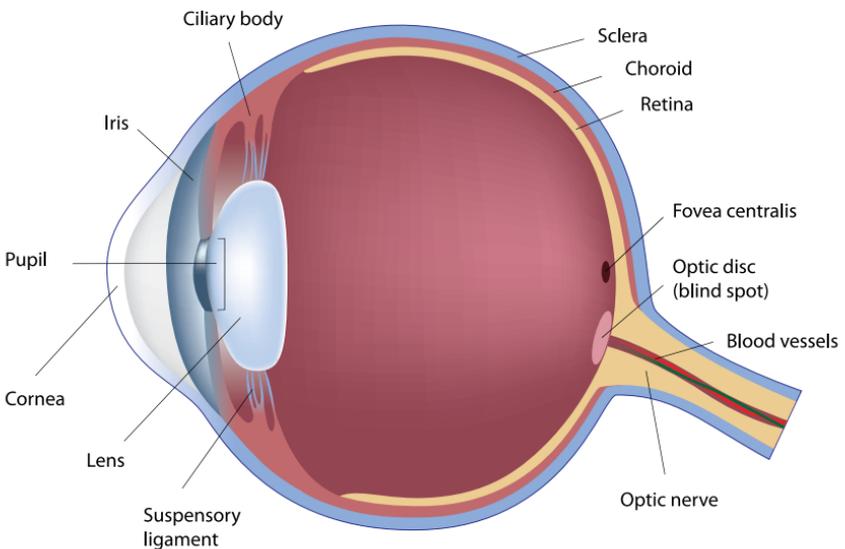
- **Glaucoma**
- **Cataracts**
- **Eye Injuries**
- **Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)**
- **Central Retinal Vein Occlusion (CRVO)**
- **Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion (BRVO)**
- **Diabetes-related Eye Disease**
- **Maintaining Your Eye Health**



Introduction

When you think of all the things you need to keep track of in order to stay healthy, do your eyes come to the top of the list? If not, they should! Eye diseases and injuries can be serious. If left untreated, they can lead to reduced vision or blindness. Your eye health is also connected to your overall health in some ways you may not expect. Keep reading to find out more about common eye diseases and disorders, and their symptoms.

Eye Anatomy





Common Vision Conditions

You may already be aware of some of the most common conditions related to your vision.

Nearsightedness: Also known as myopia, this is a condition where close objects appear clearly but far-away objects are blurry. Nearsightedness affects nearly 30 percent of the U.S. population and typically occurs first in children. However, adults can also develop nearsightedness.

Farsightedness: Also known as hyperopia, this is a condition where objects in the distance appear clearly but close objects are blurry. Farsightedness is also common but does not always cause significant trouble with day-to-day activities.

Astigmatism: This is another very common vision condition that can cause distorted or blurry vision, headaches and discomfort in your eyes. Astigmatism often occurs with other conditions such as nearsightedness and farsightedness.

Presbyopia: This is a common condition that occurs with age when the lens of the eye gradually loses its flexibility. Presbyopia makes it difficult to focus on objects up close.

If you are having trouble seeing clearly, the best thing you can do is see an eye care professional. They will perform an eye exam to determine what might be causing the vision problem. In many cases, conditions including nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism can be addressed with glasses or contact lenses. You can also talk to your eye doctor about other corrective options for your vision including laser surgery.

Common Eye Diseases

Eye diseases can be serious. If left untreated, they can lead to reduced vision or blindness, which can interfere with your day-to-day activities.

*Read below to find out more about common eye diseases and their symptoms. **If you have any of the listed symptoms, visit your healthcare provider ASAP!***

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

This is the leading cause of vision loss in people aged 50 years and older. This happens when a small central portion of the retina, known as the macula, deteriorates. The macula is the part of the eye that provides sharp, central vision needed for seeing objects clearly. Having this condition makes it harder to recognize faces, walk, drive, read, or do close work like fixing things around the house.

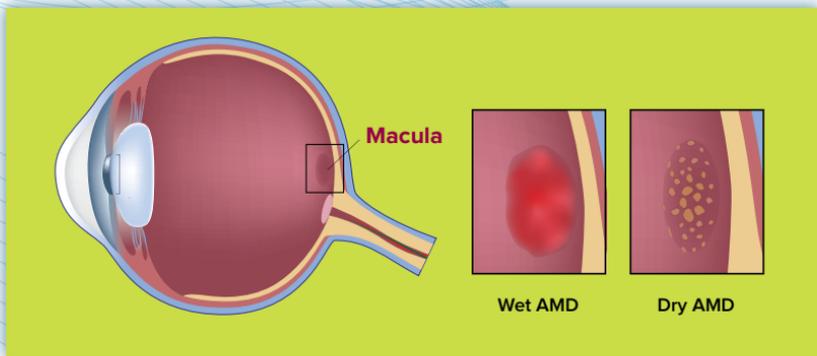
There are two main types of AMD: Dry and Wet.

Dry AMD

This is when the light-sensitive cells in the macula slowly break down, gradually blurring central vision in the affected eye. This is the more common of the two types of AMD. In the early stages of Dry AMD, you may not be aware of any symptoms. As the disease advances, you may notice the following:

Symptoms

- Needing brighter light when reading or doing close work
- Difficulty adapting to low light levels, such as when entering a dimly lit room
- Increasing blurriness of printed words
- A decrease in the intensity or brightness of colors
- Difficulty recognizing faces
- Hazy or less well-defined vision
- Straight lines look irregular or bent, and objects appear a different color or shape in each of the eyes



Treatment

There is currently no cure for Dry AMD, but there are steps you can take that may reduce vision loss. This includes changes in your diet and vitamin intake. Your healthcare provider may also recommend surgery to implant a telescopic lens in your eye to improve your vision.

Wet AMD

Wet AMD is the more advanced type of AMD. This is when abnormal blood vessels develop beneath the macular retina and leak blood and fluid, resulting in scarring and visual impairment. Wet AMD usually progresses more rapidly than the dry version, and generally leads to more serious vision loss.

Symptoms

- Visual distortions, such as straight lines appearing wavy or crooked, a doorway or street sign looking lopsided, or objects appearing smaller or farther away than they really are
- Decreased central vision
- Decreased intensity or brightness of colors
- Blurry spots or blind spots in your field of vision
- Seeing shapes, people and /or animals that are not really there

Treatment

Wet AMD can result in severe vision loss. However, treatments from your eye care professional may prevent further vision loss. These treatments can include injections of drugs that block the growth of abnormal blood vessels. Less commonly, laser surgery may be performed to treat Wet AMD.

Retinal Vein Occlusions

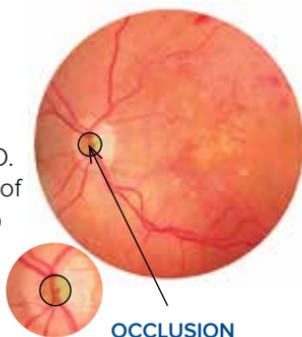
The retina is the nerve tissue in the back of the eye that requires healthy blood circulation for visual function. When blood vessels to the retina are blocked, it is known as a retinal vein occlusion or “eye stroke” and can cause sudden blindness.

There are two types of retinal vein occlusions: Central Retinal Vein Occlusion (CRVO) and Branch Retinal Vein Occlusion (BRVO).

CRVO

Blood enters the retina through the central retinal artery and drains out of the retina through the central retinal vein. When the central retinal vein becomes blocked, this is called a central retinal vein occlusion or CRVO. This means that blood cannot flow in and out of the retina properly, causing the retina to fill up with blood and swell, resulting in vision loss. There are two types of CRVO:

- **Non-ischemic CRVO.** This is less serious and accounts for a majority of the cases.
- **Ischemic CRVO.** This is the more serious form because the retina becomes so “starved” for oxygen that new blood vessels grow in various locations in the eye to improve the insufficient blood supply. Unfortunately, this is dangerous and can lead to vision loss and possibly loss of the eye.



BRVO

This is when the small branches of the main vein in the retina are blocked. As with CRVO, part of the retinal blood flow slows down or stops which results in vision loss. This usually occurs in one eye and results in blurred vision, or a missing area of vision.

Symptoms of CRVO and BRVO

- Sudden loss of vision or blurring in part or all of one eye
- Floaters (small moving spots) in your vision
- In severe cases, painful pressure in the eye

Treatment for CRVO and BRVO

Unfortunately, there is no way to unblock retinal veins. However, it may be possible to prevent another blockage from forming in the same or the other eye. This can be done through laser treatment, drug injections or a vitrectomy (surgery). Many people may regain some of the lost vision without treatment; however, their vision rarely returns to normal.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve and can result in vision loss or blindness. It develops slowly and sometimes without noticeable sight loss for many years. With early detection and treatment, you can often protect your eyes against serious vision loss. Risk factors for glaucoma include being over 40, being African-American or Hispanic, having a family history of glaucoma and/or being diabetic.

Symptoms

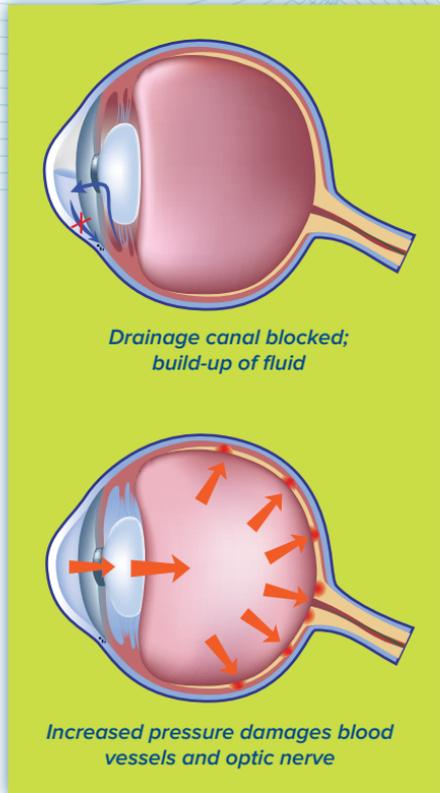
- Loss of side vision which, in advanced stages, can develop into tunnel vision
- Sudden, severe blurring of vision
- Severe pain in or around the eye
- Eye redness
- "Halos" around lights

Treatment

Early diagnosis is important as it can delay progression of the disease. Although treatment may save your remaining vision, it does not improve sight already lost from glaucoma. Treatments include

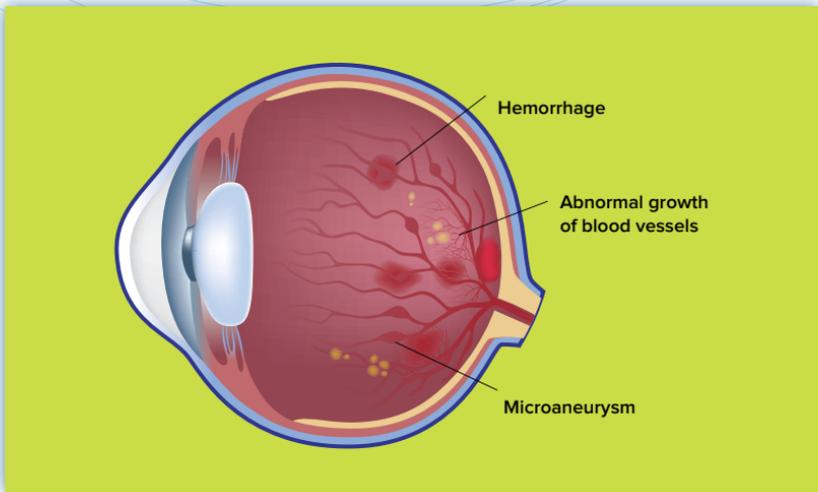
- **Medicines:** This is usually in the form of eye drops or pills. These lower your eye pressure by making the eye less fluid or draining fluid from the eye.
- **Laser trabeculoplasty:** This surgical procedure helps to drain fluid out of the eye.
- **Conventional Surgery:** This makes a new opening for the fluid to leave the eye. This is often done if other methods do not work.

Your healthcare provider may also use a combination of the treatments mentioned above.



Diabetic Retinopathy

This is the most common diabetic eye disease. When diabetes is untreated, it can damage the small blood vessels in your retina (in the back part of your eye). The damaged blood vessels cause bleeding, swelling and scarring that can lead to poor vision or blindness. This is called Diabetic Retinopathy. You usually only notice symptoms once the damage is severe.



Symptoms

- Blurred vision and slow vision loss over time
- Shadows or missing areas of vision
- Trouble seeing at night

Treatment

To prevent the disease from getting worse during the early stages, you should control your levels of blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

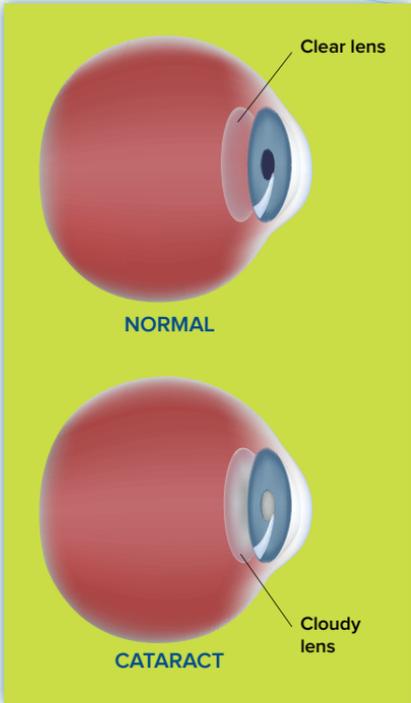
During the later stages, although there is no cure, your healthcare provider may recommend getting scatter laser treatment or a vitrectomy (surgery) to reduce vision loss.

Cataracts

A cataract is when the clear lens of your eye is cloudy. Clouded vision caused by cataracts can make it more difficult to read, drive a car — especially at night — or see the expression on a friend's face.

Symptoms

- Clouded, blurred or dim vision
- Increasing difficulty with vision at night
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Seeing “halos” around lights
- Frequent changes in eyeglass or contact lens prescription
- Fading or yellowing of colors
- Double vision in a single eye



Treatment

During the early stages, the effects of cataracts may be improved with new eyeglasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses, or magnifying lenses. If these measures do not help, surgery is the only effective treatment. This involves removing the cloudy lens and replacing it with an artificial lens. Many people who need cataract surgery also have other eye conditions, such as age-related macular degeneration or glaucoma. Be sure to talk to your health care provider about how these conditions may be related.

Eye Injuries

More than 2.5 million Americans suffer eye injuries every year and 73% of them are male, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Eye injuries can take place on the job, while playing sports, or during accidents on the road. However, nearly half take place at home during activities like yard and house work.

The vast majority of eye injuries are preventable.

One of the easiest and smartest things you can do

to protect yourself and your family is to get a pair of protective eyewear. Look for eyewear certified by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) to protect your eyes while working on your home or yard. Also, be sure to always use the recommended eyewear for your job and any sports you play.

If you or someone you know suffers an eye injury, get help from an eye doctor or other medical professional right away. Delaying medical attention could lead to vision loss or even blindness. With appropriate care, most people will recover from eye injuries without significant vision loss.



People suffering an eye injury may experience:

- Obvious eye pain or trouble seeing
- A cut, torn or drooping eyelid
- Sensation that something is in the eye
- Eye redness
- Blood covering the white or pupil of the eye

If you experience any of the listed symptoms, make sure you consult your healthcare provider right away!

Maintaining Your Eye Health

See the whole picture. Protect your eye health by:

- Eating a healthy diet with lots of fruits and vegetables
- Wearing sunglasses and hats when in sunlight
- Limiting your alcohol intake
- Getting regular eye check ups
- Maintaining a healthy weight by exercising regularly
- Quitting smoking, as it has been linked to risk of developing age-related macular degeneration and cataracts
- Always wearing your protective eye goggles when necessary



EYE TIP! The 20-20-20 Rule

If you spend a lot of time at the computer, you can sometimes forget to blink and your eyes can get tired.

Give your eyes a rest. Try the 20-20-20 rule: Every **20** minutes, look at something **20** feet away for **20** seconds.

What Type of Doctor Should You See?

There are different types of eye care professionals, or “eye doctors.”

Optometrists are healthcare professionals who are concerned with the health of the eyes and have completed a degree in optometry. They focus on vision care, including eye exams and prescribing glasses and contacts. They may also diagnose other eye conditions such as glaucoma, macular degeneration and cataracts. In some cases, they can prescribe medications for eye conditions.

Ophthalmologists are physicians who have completed medical school and have chosen to specialize in eye care. Like Optometrists, they perform eye exams and can give you options to improve your vision. They can also diagnose and treat all of the eye conditions mentioned in this booklet by performing surgery and prescribing medications. For serious medical eye conditions, you will likely need to see an ophthalmologist.



You may also work with an **optician** on your vision care. Opticians are not eye doctors, but they fill the prescriptions for glasses and contacts that your eye doctor provides you. Opticians can help with selecting and adjusting the lenses you need.

If you do not already have an eye doctor, you can also discuss concerns about your eye health with your regular healthcare provider. He or she can help you find the right professional to meet your needs. You can also ask your family and friends to suggest an eye doctor – chances are you know someone who has needed eye care recently.

Retinal Eye Specialists are highly-trained eye physicians and surgeons who focus on diseases in the back of the eye. They have completed medical school and specialized training as an ophthalmologist, and then pursued additional vitreoretinal (retina diseases) training. If you have age-related macular degeneration (AMD) or diabetic retinopathy then you will mostly likely see a retina eye specialist. A retina specialist may also treat a patient who has experienced severe eye trauma, and may be consulted in the case of patients dealing with hereditary diseases of the eye.

Where to Go for Help

If you are losing your vision, the following organizations may be able to help by referring you to the appropriate health specialists.

Lighthouse International (www.lighthouse.org)

Prevent Blindness America (www.preventblindness.org)

Foundation Fighting Blindness (www.blindness.org)

AMD Alliance International (www.amdalliance.org)

For more info on eye conditions visit:

National Eye Institute
www.nei.nih.gov/health

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/visionhealth

American Academy of Ophthalmology
www.aao.org

American Optometric Association
www.aoa.org

Men's Health Library
www.menshealthlibrary.com

Want to Learn More?

For more information on other health problems that affect men, boys and their families, visit www.menshealthnetwork.org.

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