

Charting the need for eyeglasses: 10 signs you should get an eye exam

We cannot spell the word “glasses” without an “a” and an “e.” But if you have trouble telling these two letters apart, does it mean you actually need vision correction?

Chances are it means you should have an eye exam. Roughly 60% of the world’s population requires vision correction, according to the Vision Impact Institute.¹ That’s a lot of people, but the good news is 80% of all visual impairment can be avoided or corrected.² In fact, 75% of Americans use some sort of vision correction.³

Figuring out if you need glasses is simply a matter of understanding the symptoms of vision loss. Following are 10 signs that you might need vision correction and should schedule an eye exam.

While the presence of one or more of these signs may not mean a vision problem, an eye exam is recommended to be safe. An eye doctor can help you understand what is causing these changes.

1

WARNING SIGN 1) FUZZY OPTICS:

If you have trouble recognizing a friend from across a room or are holding your digital tablet at arm’s length, you may be developing [farsightedness \(hyperopia\)](#) or [nearsightedness \(myopia\)](#). If it’s challenging to see objects both near and far, it could be astigmatism, a common condition involving a curvature of the eye lens, or cornea.⁴

2

WARNING SIGN 2) SLIGHT NIGHT SIGHT:

If you can no longer make out the difference between a shrub and a dog while on your nightly walk, you may be experiencing signs of [early cataracts](#). You should be examined – soon.⁵

3

WARNING SIGN 3) DARK TO LIGHT BLUES:

If it takes your eyes longer to adjust after the screen goes dark in the theater, it likely means the muscles that help your irises contract and expand are weakening. It is likely age-related, as are many vision problems.⁶

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WARNING SIGN 4) COMPUTING ISSUES:

If you cannot stand to read another word of that work project on [your computer](#), it may have more to do with farsightedness than the assignment. Boot up on the same website each day and sit at the same, measured distance to see if your vision worsens.

5

WARNING SIGN 5) EYE FATIGUE:

Focusing is to our eyes what push-ups are to our upper bodies – a workout. When we regularly squint or blink to bring items into focus, we get eye fatigue. Other causes include driving, writing, staring at your smartphone or general blurry vision, or [presbyopia](#). Take regular breaks and adjust the lights to reduce glare. If the fatigue persists, see your doctor.⁷

6

WARNING SIGN 6) POUNDING TEMPLES:

Sometimes the mechanism that helps the cornea and lens focus on images fails, and the small muscles in the eye are forced to work harder. The resulting eye strain can cause [headaches](#).⁸ So if your head hurts after a lot of reading or focusing, you may need glasses.

7

WARNING SIGN 7) DOUBLE TROUBLES:

Seeing two cookies when there's only one is not only disappointing, it may signal more serious issues. Seeing double, or diplopia, might indicate problems with your cornea or eye muscles or can be a symptom of cataracts. Call the doctor on the double.⁹

8

WARNING SIGN 8) CURVY LINES:

If the blinds on the windows begin looking like they are under water, it's time for an eye exam. Distorted lines and fading colors could be [evidence of macular degeneration](#), the deterioration of the central portion of the retina and a leading cause of vision loss.¹⁰

9

WARNING SIGN 9) HELLO HALOS:

If you see rings of light around people or objects, and they are not being backlit, you may be developing cataracts or night vision problems. These glowing eye halos are usually more pronounced in the dark. Fortunately, cataract risk can be reduced with a good diet, [sunglasses](#) and no smoking.^{11,12}

10

WARNING SIGN 10) PRESSING ISSUES:

A sense of pressure or pushing in the back of your eye could indicate [developing glaucoma](#). Don't be alarmed – it's highly treatable. What happens is the angle in your eye causes pressure buildup that can damage the optic nerve, which transmits images to your brain. Not everyone with eye pressure has glaucoma, but you should still get it checked.¹³

¹"The Cost of Uncorrected Vision," Jean-Félix Biosse-Duplan, The Vision Impact Institute, Oct. 24, 2014

²"Visual impairment and blindness," World Health Organization, August 2014, www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/

³"What Percentage of the Population Wears Glasses?" GlassesCrafter.com, citing the Vision Council of America, www.glassescrafter.com/information/percentage-population-wears-glasses.html

⁴Diseases and Conditions, Astigmatism, Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/astigmatism/basics/definition/con-20022003

⁵"Night Vision Problems: Halos, Blurred Vision, and Night Blindness," WebMD, www.webmd.com/eye-health/night-vision-problems-halos-blurred-vision-night-blindness

⁶"Growing Older and Adjusting to the Dark," by Jane Brody, The New York Times, March 13, 2007

⁷"Eye Fatigue," WebMD, www.webmd.com/eye-health/eye-fatigue-causes-symptoms-treatment#2

⁸"Headache and eye problems," Better Health Channel, www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Headache_and_eye_problemshttp://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Headache_and_eye_problems

⁹"Double Vision (Diplopia)," WebMD, www.webmd.com/eye-health/double-vision-diplopia-causes-symptoms-diagnosis-treatment

¹⁰"Vision Problems," U.S. National Library of Medicine, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003029.htm

¹¹Ibid.

¹²"Nutrition and Cataracts," American Optometric Association, www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/caring-for-your-vision/nutrition/nutrition-and-cataracts?ss=y

¹³"Vision Problems," U.S. National Library of Medicine, www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003029.htm