

Do you know when you should get your eyes tested?

An eye test is important at different times in our life. The frequency of eye examination depends on your age and your problem.

You will need an eye test at any age if you:

- Are squinting to see things better
- Have blurred or double vision
- Suffer from headaches or pain in your eyes
- Sees floaters and/or flashing lights
- Have a shadow in your vision
- Have to bring things very close to see it (any age) or hold it further away than normal to read (>40years)*

Regular eye tests are required for

- **Diabetics** (at least an annual dilated eye examination, or as determined by your Eye MD)
- **Glaucoma patients** (every 3-4 months)
- If you wear glasses/contact lenses wearers (at least annually)
- Taking prescriptions that have ocular side effects (eg plaquenil/chloroquine/steroids, etc)

Guidelines for Timing of Eye Examinations are summarized below:

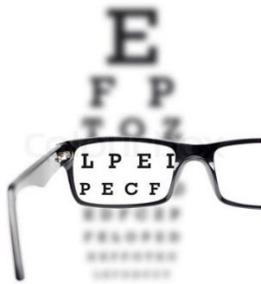
Babies and Children:

All premature babies born ≤ 32 weeks old gestational age and ≤ 1500 gm birth weight, must be screened by an Ophthalmologist (Eye MD) by 6 weeks of age. Problems with the development of the eye can be picked up and treated early.

1 in 5 children have an undetected eye problem, which can be determined by visual screening. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) recommend that your child's eyes be screened for problems at birth, 6 months and pre school screening (3 to 4 years of age). Screening can be done in the initial stage by the paediatrician assessing the red reflex and vision.

A full comprehensive eye examination must be performed by 5 years by an eye doctor. During a comprehensive eye exam, the eyes are checked for glasses (refractive errors eg: nearsightedness/farsightedness), squint (cast eye), amblyopia (lazy eye), etc are ruled out. Schools may do visual screening every 2 years and refer children to the eye doctor as required. However, if you think your child has visual

problems take them to the eye doctor. Undetected vision problems in children can lead to headaches, bad behavior and poor grades.



Adults:

- 20-39 years old who are healthy, with no eye complaints, don't wear glasses, no history of eye injury/surgery and no family history of eye disease, should be tested every 5 years, according to the AAO guidelines, **applying only to adults with no medical illness or risk factors for eye disease.** However the American Optometric Association recommends this group have an eye test every 2 years.
- Over 40 years old every 12-18 months. (may need reading glasses)*
- Over 60 years old (to rule out cataracts and glaucoma) every 12-18 months

Special Situations:

Some groups of people are at a **higher risk, these include:**

- **Family history of Glaucoma:** you must have regular screening after age 40 years old
- **Glaucoma patients:** Eye exam every 3-4 months depending on the severity
- **Diabetics: Must have a baseline dilated eye examination by an Ophthalmologist** at diagnosis and an **annual dilated eye examination.** More frequently if eye problems are noted during examination. The Ophthalmologist can see and treat BEFORE they start to lose vision. When diabetes results in visual loss, it can be very difficult to treat and may require surgery. **Diabetes (diabetic retinopathy) is the 3rd commonest cause of blindness in the USA.**

Diabetics have a higher risk of glaucoma and cataracts and retinopathy. Early detection is critical in the treatment of diabetes retinopathy. Regular eye examinations are important if you have an increased risk of eye problems.

An Eye Exam Can Save You Money long term — and Your Life, by identifying problems and treating early especially in diabetic patients. For more information visit www.geteyesmart.org .

*Dr Lizette Mowatt FRCS (Ed), FRCOphth
Consultant Ophthalmologist/Retinal Specialist*