



Stay Healthy

Ask the Nurse

Q: Is it necessary to have an eye exam every year?

A: Absolutely. As you age, there is a risk of developing serious eye problems that can lead to the loss of your eyesight. These conditions can affect your safety and independence. With a yearly eye exam your doctor can detect any problems and prescribe treatment that will delay or prevent vision loss. If you have diabetes, if your family has a history of eye disease, or if you are taking medication that might have side effects on your eyes, you should consult an eye doctor (optometrist or ophthalmologist) about scheduling an eye exam that best meets your needs.

Losing Vision? AMD May Be the Cause

Are you having difficulty seeing clearly? Is your vision blurry? Age-related macular degeneration (AMD) may be the cause. AMD occurs when the arteries in your retina harden and deprive it of oxygen and nutrients. When this happens, your central vision deteriorates, making it difficult to read or to focus on detailed tasks. Straight lines, like edges around windows and doors, may also appear distorted and wavy. AMD affects only central vision, so you can still see clearly out of the corners of your eyes. AMD may be the result of a combination of several factors: genetics, nutrition, smoking, and sunlight exposure. It is important to have your eyes checked regularly. Only an eye doctor can diagnose AMD.

If you have AMD there are several things you can do for the health of your eyes.

- Check with your eye doctor about taking a multivitamin with zinc. People with AMD may be lacking in the nutrients zinc, lutein, and antioxidants.
- Add green leafy vegetables like

spinach, kale, turnip and collard greens to your diet.

- Protect your eyes from sunlight with UV-protection sunglasses.
- Stop smoking, since this impairs the blood circulation to your eyes.
- Exercise to your capability to increase circulation.

There are several things you can do to make reading easier.

- Use a halogen light with less glare, rather than a standard light bulb. Shine the light directly on the page.
- Use a magnifying glass that will increase the print size.
- Try a large-print book or listen to books on tape. Most libraries have these available.

AMD may be only one cause of your fading eyesight. Other causes may be cataracts or glaucoma (which will be discussed in months to come). Your eyesight is precious. Preserve it as best as you can.

If you have a home health care need, CALL: 1-888-VNS-1-CALL (1-888-867-1225) or VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.VNSNY.org