

The Effects of Aging on Vision Explained

October 9, 2007

As people get older, it is normal for their vision to change. The effects of aging on vision can range from mildly irritating changes to serious eye diseases. Because vision is so vital to daily living, it is important to recognize changes.

As you age, you or someone else may notice that you are experiencing symptoms of vision deterioration. Signs include:

- Persistent flashing light or big shadows in your field of vision
- Choosing bright over dull coloured objects or clothing;
- Spilling food or drinks because you misjudge where items are;
- Having difficulties with driving at night;
- Making driving mistakes, such as missing street signs or traffic signs; and
- Falling because of a missed step or an unseen object on the floor.

Several diseases and conditions can affect vision. Three of these conditions include cataracts, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration.

Cataracts

Cataracts are a gradual clouding of the natural lens of the eye, preventing light from reaching the retina. The clouding may prevent you from being able to read or drive unless the cataract is removed. Fortunately, this is one of the most successful surgeries done in medicine today and is quite common.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma develops when the pressure within the eye starts to destroy the nerve fibres within the retina. If not treated early, glaucoma can cause vision loss and blindness. Because most people have no early symptoms, regular eye examinations are required to detect it. Treatment may include eye drops, medication, or surgery.

Age-related Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration occurs when the macula (the central part of the retina responsible for sharp focus) becomes less functional. This damage may be the result of many factors, including aging, smoking and diabetes and it causes permanent loss of central vision. Proper nutrition and some supplements may prevent progression. In wet macular degeneration laser treatments may stabilize and medication injected into the eye may actually improve the central vision loss.

With Information from Health Canada

Sunnybrook Speaker Series talk on *Your Eyes: Vision Health 2007*

October 17, 2007 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. McLaughlin Auditorium, Sunnybrook Campus 2075 Bayview

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