



Eye Conditions Overview

Alcon[®]

A reference guide to eye conditions and diseases

Do you know the difference between a cataract and glaucoma or myopia and hyperopia? The differences between the various eye conditions and diseases – and their potential to impact vision – can be difficult for many patients to discern. Knowledge of the conditions that affect eye health is an important part of a proactive and preventative health routine. Regular eye examinations by an eye care professional (ECP) are important, given that more than 80% of visual impairment can be treated, prevented or cured.¹

Amblyopia (lazy eye)	Decreased vision due to abnormal visual development in childhood. ² This is the most common cause of vision problems in children. ² Amblyopia may only be detected by a properly performed vision test and must be identified in childhood for treatment to be effective. ²
Cataract	Clouding of the eye's lens, preventing the passage of light to the retina and impairing vision. ⁴ Cataract may occur in one or both eyes and typically occurs as a result of aging. ⁴ Symptoms may include blurry, cloudy or filmy vision, double vision, glare from lights and poor night vision. ⁴ In early stages, frequent eyeglass prescription changes are common. ⁴
Color blindness	The difficulty to see or differentiate certain color shades. ⁶ The most common form is the inability to distinguish reds and greens, followed by blues and yellows. ⁵ Rarely is a person completely colorblind. ⁶ Symptoms may include seeing some colors but not others or seeing certain colors differently than other people do. ⁶
Corneal ulcer	An open sore on the cornea, the normally transparent front of the eye. ⁷ The ulcer may appear as a white spot on the cornea. ⁷ Symptoms may include redness, eye pain, feeling something in the eye, tearing, pus or thick discharge, blurred vision, light sensitivity, or swollen eyelids. ⁷ Corneal ulcers may occur with soft contact lens wear. ⁷

Detached retina	Occurs when the retina, the light-sensitive 'film' in the back of the eye necessary for vision, detaches from its supporting layers. ⁸ Symptoms may include flashes of bright light, blurred vision, floaters, shadows and loss of a portion of the field of vision. ⁸
Diabetic retinopathy	Is caused by progressive damage to the blood vessels in the retina, often leading to blindness. ⁹ This condition is a result of elevated blood sugar levels due to long-term Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes. ⁹ Often there are no symptoms during the early stages. ⁹
Dry eye syndrome	Results from inadequate wetting and lubrication of the eye. ¹⁰ This is caused when tear glands stop making enough tears or produce poor quality tears, or the tears evaporate too quickly. ¹⁰ Symptoms may include blurred vision, contact lens discomfort, excessive tearing, eye fatigue and irritation, feeling like something is in the eye, itching, redness, light sensitivity and/or stringy mucus. ¹⁰
Eye allergies	Develop when the body's immune system reacts to an allergen such as pollen, grass, weeds, dust or pet dander. ^{11,12} Signs and symptoms typically include itchy eyes, red eyes, increased tears, mucous production and possibly blurred vision. ¹²
Eye infections	Develop when harmful microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi or viruses infect different parts of the eye. ¹³ The most common eye infections are conjunctivitis, keratitis (inflammation of the cornea) and blepharitis (inflammation of the eyelids). Signs and symptoms may include redness, irritation, swelling, discharge, matting, pain and vision problems. ¹³ Certain infections may be highly contagious. ¹³
Eye inflammation	Occurs in association with an immune response to germs, foreign body, toxins or tissue damage in the eye. ³ Ocular and eyelid redness, heat and swelling are common as white blood cells work to rid the cause. ³ Signs and symptoms may include blurred vision, floaters, eye pain, redness and light sensitivity. ³
Eye vascular occlusions (eye strokes)	Occur when veins and arteries are blocked, leading to decreased or distorted vision. ¹⁴
Floaters and spots	Floaters are specks of material suspended in the vitreous humor, the jelly-like material filling the inside of the eye, and appear as black or gray specks, strings or cobwebs that drift about in your field of vision as the eye moves. ¹⁵
Glaucoma	An eye disease that damages the optic nerve, the nerve responsible for sending light images from the retina to the brain. ¹⁶ In most glaucoma cases, the condition develops when too much pressure builds up inside the eye. ¹⁶ This disease can lead to serious vision loss or blindness. ¹⁶ In most cases of glaucoma in adults there are no symptoms, making eye examinations by an eye care professional (ECP) important. Signs and symptoms of the less common acute glaucoma may include hazy eyes, nausea or vomiting, eye pain, redness, seeing halos around lights and tunnel vision. ¹⁶

Macular degeneration	<p>Occurs when the macula, a region in the retina that interprets fine detail, deteriorates.¹⁷ Daily activities requiring visual focus (e.g., reading and driving) can become difficult and vision can be lost.¹⁷ This eye disease is often called age-related macular degeneration (AMD) because most patients are over age 50.¹⁷ Symptoms may include distorted, unclear vision and dark or empty areas in the center of the vision.¹⁷ There are two main types of AMD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dry form: 90% of people with AMD have the “dry” form, which is characterized by the presence of yellow deposits, called drusen, in the macula.^{22,23} A few small drusen may not change vision; however, as they grow in size and number, they may lead to a dimming or distortion of vision. This may be noticeable when reading.²² In more advanced stages of dry macular degeneration, there is also a thinning of the light-sensitive layer of cells in the macula leading to atrophy, or tissue death.²² In the atrophic form of dry macular degeneration, patients may have blind spots in the center of their vision. In advanced stages, patients lose central vision.²²• Wet form: The “wet” form of AMD is characterized by the growth of abnormal blood vessels from the choroid under the macula, a condition called choroidal neovascularization.²² These blood vessels leak blood and fluid into the retina, causing distortion of vision that makes straight lines look wavy, blind spots and loss of central vision.²² The abnormal blood vessels eventually scar, leading to permanent loss of central vision.²²
Macular hole	<p>A small break in the macular region of the retina, the area responsible for sharp central vision.¹⁸ Symptoms may include distorted, blurred vision.¹⁸</p>
Nystagmus	<p>A condition in which the eye makes uncontrolled, repetitive movements resulting in reduced vision.¹⁹ Signs may include side to side, up and down, and/or circular eye movements and unusual head positions or head nodding.¹⁹</p>
Presbyopia	<p>Age-related difficulty in focusing the eye to see close objects.²⁰ Symptoms may include double vision, eyestrain, haziness, headaches and squinting.²⁰</p>
Refractive errors	<p>Lack of a clear image on the retina due to the shape or size of the eye, resulting in poor vision if not corrected with glasses, contact lenses or refractive surgery.²⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Astigmatism: Occurs when the cornea isn’t perfectly round causing the image to blur as light enters the eye.²⁰• Hyperopia (farsightedness): Occurs when the length of the eye is too short, making it easier to see distant objects and harder to see close ones.²⁰• Myopia (nearsightedness): Occurs when the length of the eye has grown too long, allowing close objects to be seen clearly, but blurring the image of objects farther away.²⁰ <p>Symptoms may include double vision, eyestrain, glare or halos around bright lights, haziness, headaches and squinting.²⁰</p>

Strabismus	<p>Eye muscle imbalance causing the eyes to turn in (“crossed eyes”) or out (“out-turned eyes”) in relation to each other, preventing them from being able to look at an object together.²¹ Signs and symptoms may include eyes that don’t line up, depth perception loss, double vision and vision loss.²¹</p>
Uveitis	<p>Inflammation of the eye’s pigmented layers (iris, ciliary body and choroid) inside the eye resulting in decreased vision, cataracts, glaucoma and/or blindness.³ Signs and symptoms may include redness, blurred vision, eye pain, light sensitivity and floaters.³</p>

To maintain healthy eyesight and eye health, be sure to schedule regular examinations with your eye care professional.

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