



# Women and vision: Keeping an **eye on your health.**



If you're female, you're more likely than your male counterparts to develop several common yet serious eye diseases. But you have more control over the outcome than you may think. A healthy lifestyle and routine eye exams help you preserve your vision for many years to come.



## Age-related macular degeneration

Women often live longer than men, five to seven years on average.<sup>1</sup> That longevity increases your likelihood of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is the leading cause of permanent impairment of reading and fine or close-up vision among people aged 65 years and older.<sup>2</sup> This slow-moving disease of the retina blurs the sharp, central vision you need to see fine details and perform activities that require “straight-ahead” vision, like reading and driving.

### You may be able to avoid AMD by:<sup>3</sup>



Avoiding smoking



Exercising regularly



Eating a healthy diet  
rich in green, leafy  
vegetables and fish



Maintaining normal  
blood pressure and  
cholesterol levels

## Common symptoms

At its earliest stage, AMD is only noticeable to eye care professionals. As the disease progresses, you'll observe blurring of your central vision (wet AMD), or you'll notice that straight lines appear to be curved or distorted (dry AMD).

## Treatment

The earlier AMD is diagnosed and treated, the better the results. Laser therapy to seal off leaking blood vessels can slow the onset of vision loss in cases of wet AMD. No effective treatment currently exists for dry AMD.<sup>3</sup> Although your risk of AMD is higher if a family member has it, researchers believe your lifestyle also makes a difference.



## Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a sneaky disease that slowly affects the cells that make up your optic nerve, beginning with your peripheral vision. It can interfere with your ability to drive or do other activities that require awareness of objects to your left and right.

A recent study suggests that women who enter early menopause have a higher risk of developing glaucoma.<sup>4</sup>

### Your risk also increases if you:<sup>5</sup>

- Are age 60 or older
- Are African American
- Have a family history of glaucoma
- Have diabetes, heart disease or hypertension
- Have used steroids for prolonged periods
- Have injured your eye

## Common symptoms

Chronic open angle glaucoma (COAG) is responsible for most cases of glaucoma. In the early stages of the disease, there are often no warning signs.<sup>5</sup> While the disease progresses over time, it can usually be treated effectively with medication, which is why it's so important to keep up to date with your annual eye exam.

## Treatment

When caught early, most cases can be controlled and vision loss slowed — or halted — with medication, laser treatments and/or surgery. However, without treatment, glaucoma can lead to blindness.<sup>5</sup>

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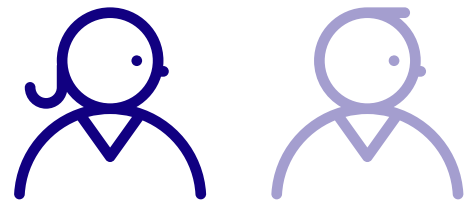




## Cataracts

Think of a cataract like a cloud on the lens of your eye. They are caused by aging cells that clump together, turn yellow and eventually block some of the light, making it difficult to see clearly.

Although cataracts are very common in older people, they are more prevalent in women than in men.<sup>6</sup>



## Common symptoms

Cataracts can be small at first, but eventually grow. **Some signs include:**<sup>7</sup>

- Clouded, blurred or dim vision
- Increasing difficulty with vision at night
- Sensitivity to light and glare
- Double vision in a single eye

## Treatment

An annual eye exam can help detect cataracts before they rob you of your vision. In their early stages, cataracts are treated with prescriptive lenses, magnification and improved lighting. As they get bigger, they can be removed surgically.

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## Dry eye disease

If you don't have enough tears to lubricate your eyes, you may be suffering from dry eye disease. It's common among middle-aged and older adults, and it's especially common among women.

## Common symptoms<sup>8</sup>

Dry eye disease can cause pain, itching and burning of the eyes that worsens as the day goes on.

## Treatment

Artificial tears are the primary treatment, but they don't reverse the condition. Ask your eye care professional for other treatment suggestions.



1. "The roles of sex and gender in women's eye health disparities in the United States"; Aninye et al.; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8527306/>; October 20, 2021.
2. "Common Eye Disorders and Diseases"; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov); last reviewed December 19, 2022.
3. "Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)"; National Eye Institute; [nei.nih.gov](https://www.nei.nih.gov); last updated June 22, 2021.
4. Zimlich, R.; "Study suggests menopause may increase risk of glaucoma, but estrogen therapy may help"; Contemporary OB/GYN; [contemporaryobgyn.net](https://www.contemporaryobgyn.net); April 12, 2023.
5. "Glaucoma"; Mayo Clinic; [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org); September 30, 2022.
6. "Why Women Need to Pay Extra Attention to Eye Health"; University of Utah Health; [healthcare.utah.edu](https://healthcare.utah.edu); April 13, 2023.
7. "Cataracts"; National Eye Institute; [nei.nih.gov](https://www.nei.nih.gov); August 24, 2023.
8. "Dry eyes"; Mayo Clinic; [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org); September 23, 2022.

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