

Vision Concerns

Vision and hearing difficulties can be a health issue for anyone. Some medical diagnoses carry a higher risk of problems with hearing and vision, e.g. hearing loss in individuals with Down Syndrome. If you have a specific special health care need, be sure to look for information about any vision or hearing problems you should screen for. Some individuals with severe behavior problems and/or severe intellectual disability have delays in diagnosis of hearing and/or vision problems because of difficulties in accessing or cooperating with the examination. However, it is important for everyone to have regular hearing and vision screening.

Regular eye and vision examinations are important. Refractive errors are the most frequent eye problems in the United States. Refractive errors include myopia (near-sightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness), astigmatism (distorted vision at all distances), and, for older adults between age 40-50 years, presbyopia (loss of the ability to focus up close, inability to read letters of the phone book, need to hold newspaper farther away to see clearly). These problems can be corrected by eyeglasses, contact lenses, or in some cases surgery. Recent studies conducted by the National Eye Institute showed that proper refractive correction could improve vision among 11 million Americans 12 years and older.

Cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens and is the leading cause of blindness worldwide, and the leading cause of vision loss in the United States. Cataracts can occur at any age due to a variety of causes.

Glaucoma occurs when the normal fluid pressure inside the eyes slowly rises. However, recent findings now show that glaucoma can occur with normal eye pressure. With early treatment, you can often protect your eyes against serious vision loss.

For more information on these and other eye problems go to:

http://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/basic_information/eye_disorders.htm

Resources:

- Eye Injuries and Sports – information handout from the American Academy of Family Physicians
<http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/healthy/physical/injuries/794.html>
- The Special Olympics program has special resources:

Special Olympics 'Opening Eyes' program (a partnership with Lions Club International) offers FREE...

- Vision and eye examinations
- Prescription eye glasses if you need them
- Prescription protective sports eyewear if you need them
- Ways to help you find an eye doctor in your hometown to provide follow-up care