



*This article contains general information dealing with health and wellness. It does not constitute medical advice and should not be relied on for diagnosing or treating any illness, injury or disease.*

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## ***"See" Your Optometrist to "Look" Beyond Vision***

Have you "seen" your eye doctor lately? As we age, and our vision changes, we likely visit our optometrist because we need adjustments to our glasses or contact prescription.

However, did you know that seeing your optometrist is important *beyond* your lens adjustments? It can help in preventing, diagnosing, and treating diseases and disorders affecting our eyes and related structures, and can also identify general health conditions that are often first detected through a comprehensive eye exam.

### ***The Importance of a Comprehensive Eye Exam***

On the Canadian Association of Optometrists' website, they liken an eye exam to a physical for your eyes. Not only does a comprehensive eye exam analyze how well you can see, and what type of interventions and accommodations are necessary to improve your sight, the exam enables the optometrist to detect serious eye diseases and disorders such as:

- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Retinal detachments
- Macular degeneration

But if you experience any of the following eye problems, see your eye doctor as soon as possible:

- Decreased vision
- Draining or redness of the eye
- Eye pain
- Double vision
- Floaters (tiny specks that appear to float before your eyes)
- Circles (halos) around lights
- Flashes of light

Any of these symptoms could be indicators of a serious health condition that needs prompt attention.

Your eyes also provide your optometrist with a window to your overall health. Comprehensive eye exams can uncover underlying and life-threatening health issues including:

- |                                             |                                 |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Aneurysm                                  | • Neurological conditions       |
| • Stroke                                    | • Lupus                         |
| • Cardiovascular disease                    | • Lyme disease                  |
| • Diabetes                                  | • Multiple sclerosis            |
| • High blood pressure                       | • Sexually transmitted diseases |
| • High cholesterol                          | • Sickle cell disease           |
| • Some cancers (brain, blood, tissue, skin) |                                 |
| • Brain injuries                            |                                 |

## ***How Often***

For adults, regular eye exams are an important part of overall health care and the maintenance of good vision. Without an eye exam, critical health issues can be overlooked. Adults up to the age of 65 should have a comprehensive eye exam at least every two years. Adults 65 and older, and any adult with diabetes, should have an eye exam at least once a year.

## ***Protecting Your Vision***

Here are some ways to take care of the well-being of your eyes and vision:

- Get regular eye exams.
- Eat a healthy diet of foods containing vitamin C and antioxidants, including leafy greens, carrots, sweet potatoes, broccoli, and squash.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Know your family's eye history.
- Practice the 20-20-20 rule: take a 20 second break from your computer screen every 20 minutes and focus your eyes on something at least 20 feet away.

- For television viewing, sit at a distance equivalent to at least five times the width of your TV screen.
- Wear sunglasses that block out 99 to 100% of UV-A and UV-B radiation (sun rays).
- Quit smoking – or don't start!

### ***Go “See” Your Optometrist***

To stay “looking” good, make an appointment to have your eyes checked. Early identification and treatment of conditions that often have no visible symptoms are key to protecting your sight and taking care of your overall well-being.

### ***Sources:***

<https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/resources/features/keep-eye-on-vision-health.html>

<https://opto.ca/eye-health-library/eye-exam>

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/surprising-health-conditions-eye-exam-detects>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact [rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca](mailto:rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca).