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The Eye Examination

An eye examination is carried out by an optometrist and usually takes about 20 - 30 minutes (but may take longer if extra specific tests are required) and will normally include the following elements:

Symptoms. Why are you having your eyes examined? Is it a routine check-up or have you come for a specific reason such as VDU screening. If you are experiencing problems with your eyes or vision your practitioner will need to know what symptoms you have, how long you have had them and whether any changes have happened suddenly or slowly over a period of time.

History. Your optometrist will need to know about your general health including if you are taking any medication, whether you suffer from headaches, currently wear spectacles or contact lenses, or have any close relatives with a history of eye problems etc. Additional information, which will help your practitioner to make an accurate assessment, includes your occupation, whether you play sports or have any hobbies etc.

Examining the Eye

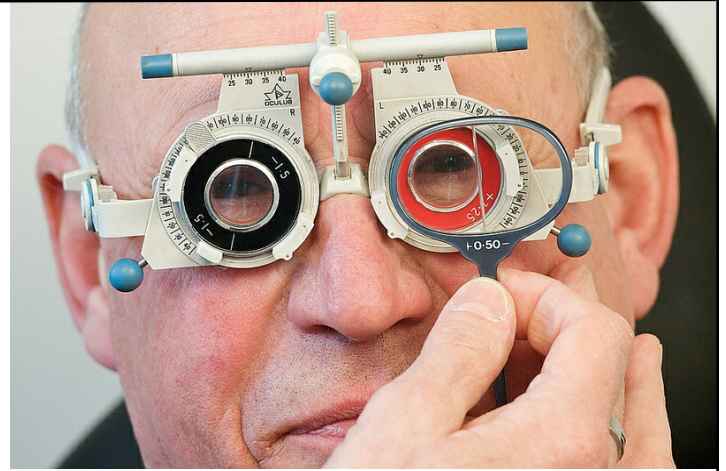
Your eyes will be examined both externally and internally. This will enable an assessment to be made of the general health of your eyes and identify any other underlying medical problems. The interior of your eye will be examined using an ophthalmoscope which shines a light through the pupil allowing a detailed study of the internal structures.

Other tests which may be carried out, if necessary, include for example those for glaucoma or colour vision deficiency. If you are over 40, the College of Optometrists recommends you should have the three glaucoma tests: to check the pressure in your eyes, your field of vision and to have an internal inspection of the eye.

Vision

Your vision will be measured both with and without spectacles or lenses in front of the eyes to check for any problems with your eyesight.

Your optometrist will do a series of tests to measure the type and extent of any problem with your vision. You will then be asked to choose between different lenses to see which ones help the quality and clarity of your vision.



Eye movements & Co-ordination

Eye movements and co-ordination are checked to make sure that both eyes are working together, and that undue stress is not being placed on their muscles. Good muscle balance is particularly important for those who use computers, drive etc.

After the eye examination

Your practitioner will now have a detailed knowledge of the health of your eyes, the standard of your vision and any special requirements that you may have. This information will be explained to you but remember, if you do not understand anything or require more information PLEASE ASK your optometrist who will be only too pleased to help.

At the end of the examination you will be advised on the appropriate interval until your next examination and be handed a prescription for spectacles or contact lenses or a statement which confirms that your eyes don't need correction. If you need medical treatment for an eye condition you may be referred to your doctor.

When you have your prescription made up, you will be given help in choosing spectacles or contact lenses. If you choose contact lenses you will be given advice on the various types of lenses available, the procedures for fitting lenses further information about caring for and cleaning your lenses.

If you are not satisfied with your spectacles or contact lenses make sure that you contact your practice so that the matter can be dealt with promptly. There may be a small fee charged for this service.

As part of continuing care and service your optometrist will be happy to adjust or make minor repairs to your spectacles where possible. Your spectacles can work loose with wear and accidents do happen!



10 GOOD REASONS FOR HAVING AN EYE EXAMINATION.

1. You only have one pair of eyes. Once lost, eyesight cannot be replaced.
2. Unlike your teeth, your eyes do not usually hurt when something is wrong.
3. The eye examination can detect early signs of potentially blinding eye conditions so they can be treated.
4. The earlier a problem is detected the greater the chance of successful treatment. This is particularly true for young children and the elderly.
5. The eye examination can detect health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes and brain tumours.
6. An eye examination checks if your eyesight needs correcting with spectacles.
7. Good quality vision means working and playing better and safer - in fact it means a better quality of life.
8. For young people, good eyesight is vital to learning. An eye examination can detect vision problems which may affect school performance.
9. Failing eyesight is often taken for granted as people get older, however by having an eye examination and remedying problems in eyesight, older people can improve their quality of life significantly.
10. Poor eyesight is dangerous. Are you sure you reach the legal requirements for driving?

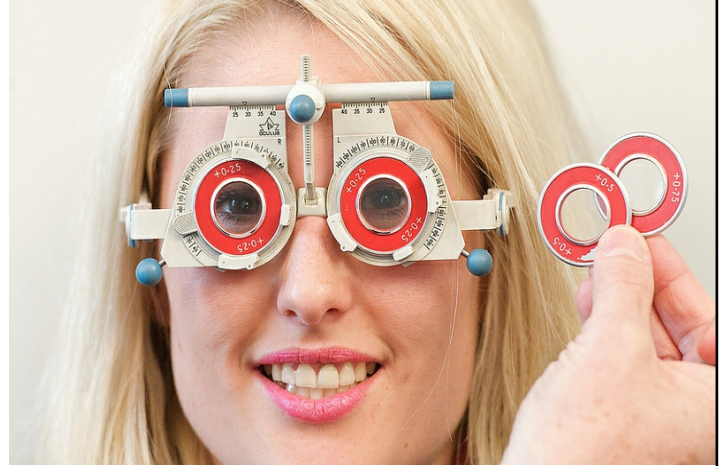
Common Eye Conditions

Short sightedness - Myopia

Short sight occurs when light is focused in front of the retina and causes distance vision to become blurred. Near vision, however, is usually clear. This commonly develops in childhood or adolescence and is often first noticed by blurring of writing on the school blackboard.

Long sightedness - hypermetropia (Hyperopia)

Long sight occurs when the natural tendency is to focus light beyond the retina rather than on it, and the eye has to make a compensating effort to re-focus. With a younger person this may only be possible with effort and may, for example, cause headaches when reading. In an older



person, as well as making reading very difficult, it may also cause distance vision to become blurred.

Astigmatism

Astigmatism occurs when the front of the eye is egg shaped instead of being regularly curved like a ball. In this case both distance and near vision may be distorted. People with this condition may suffer from headaches or be unduly sensitive to light.

Presbyopia (ageing eye)

As we get older, the lens of the eye thickens and slowly loses its flexibility leading to a gradual decline in our ability to focus on objects that are close up. This loss of focusing ability is called PRESBYOPIA.

Are you entitled to a NHS eye examination?

The following people qualify for an eye examination paid for by the NHS - do you?

Free sight tests are available for patients who are:

- a) aged 60 years and over.
- b) Under 16 years of age.
- c) Full Time Student Aged 16, 17 or 18 .
- d) Claiming:
 - Income Support.
 - Income Based Job Seekers Allowance.
 - Pension Credit Guarantee Credit.
 - Tax Credits (NHS Tax Credit Exemption Certificate).
- e) Named on a valid HC2 certificate.
- f) Registered Blind / Partially Sighted.
- g) Suffering from diabetes / glaucoma (or at risk of glaucoma).
- h) Aged 40 years and over with an immediate relative who has glaucoma.
- i) Prescribed complex lenses under the NHS optical voucher scheme.