

Falls and fractures

Most people don't see them coming

Good vision plays a fundamental role in our well-being and quality of life. As we age, vision problems can start to affect our everyday activities and mobility, increasing the risk of other problems such as falls. Falls can lead to serious injury and are one of the main reasons for admissions to hospital among over-75s.

There are many ways to reduce the risk of falls, including minimising dangers around the home, regular exercise and regular eye examinations. People who don't have good vision are more likely to fall. Some people avoid eye examinations because they think there is nothing that can be done to help their failing vision. In reality, with regular eye tests and early detection, many eye conditions can be managed or treated to help you maintain your independence longer.

Questions

What are some of the key warning signs for over-60s?

- » Spots in your vision
- » Sudden eye pain, discomfort or redness
- » Loss of central vision or edges of your vision
- » Distorted vision
- » Double vision
- » Decreased colour vision
- » Reduced ability to adjust to light changes

What are the major eye conditions among over-60s that may increase the risk of falls?

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is progressive damage to the optic nerve cells, which is often due to pressure inside the eye. It can lead to blindness if untreated. As vision loss is gradual, you may not know that you have glaucoma until irreversible damage has been done, so it is vital for it to be detected and treated early. Most cases of glaucoma can be successfully treated with ongoing management to slow the progression of the disease. The risk of glaucoma increases over the age of 40 years and it can be hereditary.

Cataract

A cataract is a clouding of the lens inside the eye, which causes loss of vision. Cataracts are very common and are usually a result of ageing and long-term exposure to sunlight. A cataract can easily be removed surgically.

For more information and help to select the treatments that meet all your eye care and lifestyle needs, ask your optometrist or visit goodvisionforlife.com.au

AMD (age-related macular degeneration)

AMD is the deterioration of the central part of the retina, which distorts close vision. Your chance of developing AMD is much higher if it runs in your family. You may not realise you have AMD until your central vision becomes quite blurry. While it cannot be cured, preventative treatments are available.

Diabetic retinopathy

Diabetes can affect the blood vessels at the back of your eye, which can cause serious vision loss. This condition, known as diabetic retinopathy, should be detected and treated early.

What can I do to maintain my eye health and help protect myself from falls?

Assess your home

Avoid clutter on the floors in your home. Do not rush and always ensure there is adequate lighting.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Maintain an active and healthy lifestyle with regular exercise, good nutrition and regular physical checkups.

Know your eyes

Be aware of the health of your eyes and how your vision is affecting your everyday life, and learn to look for warning signs and changes.

Discuss your concerns

Talk with your family and friends about any concerns you may have about your vision and mobility.

Have your eyes examined regularly by an optometrist

You may not know when you have an eye problem. The earlier a condition is detected, the greater the chance of successful treatment, helping you to retain your vision and independence and avert falls.

If you think you may have a problem with your eyes or vision, consult an optometrist immediately. Your optometrist can provide a comprehensive eye examination to detect, diagnose and manage or treat eye health problems, and update your spectacle or contact lens prescription if required.

Eye examinations attract a Medicare rebate and no referral is required. Government-subsidised spectacles are sometimes available.

Your optometrist

