

## Eye Health Fact Sheet

### Comprehensive Eye Exams

37% of Americans said they worry more about losing their vision than their memory, teeth, or ability to walk, making it the leading health worry, according to AOA's 2021 Eye-Q Survey. However, one-third (33%) said they prioritized a visit to an eye doctor in the last year while 60% saw a dentist. Annual comprehensive eye examinations with a doctor of optometry are an important part of preventive health care. Many eye and vision problems have no obvious signs or symptoms, so you might not know a problem exists. Early diagnosis and treatment of eye and vision problems can help prevent vision loss. Comprehensive eye exams can also tell you much more about your whole-body health and indicate other conditions. A full overview can be found at [AOA.org](https://www.aoa.org).

### What's the difference between a comprehensive eye exam and vision screening programs (commonly conducted in schools)?

- A vision screening only indicates a potential need for further evaluation. Even the most sophisticated vision screening tools miss one-third of children with eye or vision disorders, according to the AOA's Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline: [Comprehensive Pediatric Eye and Vision Examination](#).
- Only a doctor of optometry or ophthalmologist can conduct a comprehensive eye and vision examination. These doctors have the specialized training necessary to make a definitive diagnosis and prescribe treatment. Comprehensive eye examinations are the only effective way to confirm or rule out any eye disease or vision problem.

### Are online vision tests or apps accurate?

- Online vision tests may give inaccurate or misleading information and can give patients a false sense of security. In fact, patients may delay essential, sight-saving treatment. In-person, comprehensive eye exams are one of the most important, preventive ways to preserve vision, and the only way to accurately assess eye health, diagnose an eye disorder or disease, and determine the need for corrective lenses.
- You may have seen apps advertised that can "replace going to the eye doctor." However, online vision tests attempt to replace one element of an eye examination — the refraction — to yield a prescription for glasses or contacts. It is like taking a blood pressure reading at a kiosk and expecting a prescription — the reading does not provide sufficient information to determine a patient's needed course of therapy, including the prescription of glasses or contact lenses.

### What are common or surprising health conditions that can be found during an exam?

- A doctor of optometry can detect over 270 diseases such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration, Graves' disease, autoimmune disorders, and cancer. In fact, getting a comprehensive eye exam is *the only way to visualize the blood vessels behind the eye for issues without an x-ray, CT scan, or invasive surgery*.
- Nearly a quarter of Americans have had a firsthand experience with an eye-health professional detecting a non-eye health-related issue, diabetes being one of the most commonly found through an eye exam.
- [Concussions](#) - A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) that affects your brain function, including your vision. Symptoms can include headaches and problems with vision, concentration, memory, balance, and coordination. 90% of patients with traumatic brain injuries will suffer visual symptoms.

### Effects of Screen Time on Eye Health

Americans are spending more time on screens than ever before and its leading to a substantial increase in eye and vision-related issues compared to a decade ago. The average American spends about 7 hours and 4 minutes



looking at a screen every day [Source: [Comparitech](#)], and workers are averaging over 13 hours a day on the computer, either in the office or working from home [Source: [Eyesafe](#)]. Children ages 8-12 average 4-6 hours every day watching or using screens and adolescents between the ages of 12-13 spend about 8 hours on screens daily [Source: [JAMA](#)].

### What eye-related symptoms occur from prolonged screen time usage?

- [Computer vision syndrome](#), also referred to as digital eye strain, describes a group of eye and vision-related problems that result from prolonged computer, tablet, e-reader, and cell phone use.
- Studies have shown that screen time can lead to dry eye disease, since you blink [66% less](#) when looking at a screen, and myopia (nearsightedness). High levels of smart device screen time is associated with around a 30% higher risk of myopia and, when combined with excessive computer use, that risk rose to around 80% [Source: [Lancet Digital Health](#)].
- People who play video games have experienced various eye-related symptoms from gaming, including eye strain (48%), headaches (36%), dry eyes (35%), and blurred vision (31%) [Source: AOA's 2022 Gamer Survey].
- According to AOA's 2021 Eye-Q Survey, Americans think smartphones and computers are the biggest contributors to vision damage, and 56% have experienced intense eye-related symptoms after extended screen usage.
- According to AOA's 2021 Eye-Q Survey, over half of Americans (57%) believe digital screens are causing moderate to significant damage to their eye health, while a third of Americans (35%) say it is causing a little damage.

### What can people do to prevent these symptoms?

- To help alleviate digital eye strain, follow the [20-20-20 rule](#) by taking a 20-second break to view something 20 feet away every 20 minutes.
- Screen glare from monitors, tablets and mobile devices can negatively affect vision over the long term. Minimize glare on the computer screen by repositioning the screen or adjusting your brightness to match your environment: a brighter screen in bright lighting or dimmer in dim lighting. Also, keeping screens clean and dirt-free and removing fingerprints can decrease glare and improve clarity.

### About the American Optometric Association

The American Optometric Association (AOA) is the leading authority on and advocate for quality eye health care, representing more than 44,000 doctors of optometry, optometry students, and optometric professionals. As the sole primary eye care provider in many communities across America, doctors of optometry are often a patient's first entry point into the health care system, and have extensive, ongoing training to examine, diagnose, treat, and manage disorders, diseases, and injuries that affect the eye and visual system.

Doctors of optometry (O.D.s/optometrists), America's primary eye health care providers, are the frontline of eye and vision care. They examine, diagnose, treat, and manage diseases and disorders of the eye. They also play a major role in an individual's overall health and well-being by detecting systemic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. To learn more, check out [this blog post](#).

**[Doctor Locator](#)**: Schedule an appointment with a doctor of optometry near you.