

## The Eyes Have It

The **Save Your Vision Month** program highlights the significance of our eyesight in interpreting and enjoying life and, for this reason, the importance of regular eye exams.

Vision is something we too often take for granted--that is, until it sustains injury or starts to fade. From pinkeye to macular degeneration, any assault on the eye can be frightening. The best way to protect our eyesight is through education--knowing safety measures and recognizing warning signs and symptoms of a potential problem.

Sponsored by *The American Optometric Association* (AOA) for its 77th consecutive year, **The National Save Your Vision Month** aims to increase awareness of the necessity of regular eye exams to maintain eye health.

**The American Optometric Association recommends that you establish a regular schedule for visiting an optometrist.** You should seek eye care more frequently if new ocular, visual, or systemic health problems develop. **Persons with additional risk factors should also be examined more frequently.** As a general rule the following aged-based guideline will serve you and your family well:

<b>AGE GROUP</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
Infants and Children	By 3 years of age...just before first grade, and every 2 years thereafter
18 years - 40 years	Every 2-3 years
41 years - 60 years	Every 2 years
61 years and older	Every year

Many people associate eye problems with getting older. While it is true that seniors are at higher risk for a many eye problems, some of those problems actually begin earlier **and** vision loss might have been prevented **if** the problem had been caught sooner. Preschoolers, senior citizens, and people with diabetes--as well as others with high risk factors for certain eye problems--all need regular eye care. Too often proper eye care is put off and the sad result is vision loss.

Infants and toddlers should be screened for common childhood eye problems, such as *strabismus* (crossed-eyes) and *amblyopia* (lazy eye), during their regular pediatric appointments. Initial vision testing is recommended for all children at 3 years of age.

Even young adults and middle-agers can be affected by eye problems. Those at risk for eye disease include African-Americans over age 40 (*glaucoma*)...people with diabetes (*diabetic*

*retinopathy*)...those over age 60 (cataracts and macular degeneration)...and those with a family history of eye problems. **If you, or a loved one, fall into one of these groups, you should consult with an optometrist or an ophthalmologist to determine how often to schedule a complete eye exam.** These individuals should have a complete eye exam at least once between the ages of 20 and 29...at least twice between the ages of 30 and 39...and every two to four years between the ages of 40 and 65.

Seniors over age 65 should be examined at least every one or two years for cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, and other eye conditions. Those with diabetes should be examined every year. Protecting your eyes from accidents, as well as early detection and treatment of eye problems, are among the best ways for you and your family to take care of your vision throughout life. Wearing sunglasses is a simple way to be proactive in maintaining your eye health.

For those with special eye conditions and/or concerns, certain diet recommendations may improve eye health. *The National Eye Institute* (NEI) has reported that research confirms that nutrition can impact the development of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (for more on this, visit [www.aoa.org/nutrition.xml](http://www.aoa.org/nutrition.xml)).

If you would like more information, visit any of the websites above **or** contact **The Aker Kasten Eye Center** (1-561-338-7722...or...[www.akerkasten.com](http://www.akerkasten.com)). Our agency, **The Aker Kasten Home Health Care Agency**, is located within the Eye Center. Dr. Alan B. Aker, his wife, Dr. Ann Kasten Aker, and their dedicated team of ophthalmologists, optometrists, and ophthalmic techs have been serving this community for more than twenty-years. We would be happy to help you schedule an appointment with The Aker Kasten Eye Center, if you'd like.

The American Optometric Association ([www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)) is taking leadership in improving the eye and visual health of our nation through its own initiative, **Healthy Eyes Healthy People**. You will find helpful checklists, diet tips, and so much more at <http://www.aoa.org>.

It has been well said that ***the eyes are the window to the heart***. If your eyes are presenting a view of a burdened or troubled heart, **The Aker Kasten Home Health Care Agency** would like to help. Because we truly care, we would like to share your burden. **The Aker Kasten Home Health Care Agency** offers complementary pastoral/chaplain services to all our patients and their families who so desire. We are here for **you**--just a call away. Don't hesitate to call...

John B. Aker, D. Min.  
Administrator

Sources: Mary Whitmore, Good Shepherd Medical Center, Longview, TX...Mayo Clinic...American Cancer Society...American Optometric Association.