

Macular Degeneration

This condition is caused by a leakage of fluid behind the retina, which causes a hole, or black spot to appear in the centre of vision. Although the patient can often still get about, they cannot see any detail to read, sew or watch TV. Unfortunately, there is no known treatment for this condition at present.

The patient may look away from you during a conversation as they can only see you out of the side of their eye. They may also lose interest in reading or other close work as they can no longer see in detail what they are doing, this may lead to frustration or aggression. Continuous wandering is often another sign of this condition.

Stroke

A stroke harms the function of the brain and may also impair the eyesight. This may make the patient unaware of objects to one side and may cause them to bump into things or knock things over. Where the resident sits and how they are approached are vital to optimise stimulation and reduce frustration and fear. At mealtimes, the patient may only ever eat half their dinner or neglect their drink because they see only one half of their place setting. Turning the plate around and setting a drink to the patients 'good' side will help. Staying to their 'good' side should be a general rule of thumb.

This leaflet was compiled with information from Optomise Eyecare.

Optomise is dedicated to the specialised provision of domiciliary eye care and training. Their aim is to improve quality of life through the promotion of regular health checks and the provision of visual stimulation.

For more information on any aspect of elderly eye care call

optomise

elderly eyecare

on

028 9182 7780

or visit their website
on

www.optomise.co.uk

For their work they recently won the,
"Optician Eyecare of the Year Award,
Community Initiative".

Four Seasons Health Care Limited
Emerson Court, Alderley Road,
Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 1NX
Tel: 01625 417800
Fax: 01625 417827
E-mail: fourseasons@fshc.co.uk
Website: www.fshc.co.uk

Advice on Eye Care



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The Importance of Eyecare

As we get older our senses tend to decline and often there is nothing that can be done.

However, with regular eye care we often have the opportunity to maintain good vision. Sight is one of our most precious senses and should be protected.

Even if your friends or relatives are not currently experiencing any visual problems it is important that they have a regular eye examination. An eye examination consists of two parts, a health check and a vision check. Both parts are very important for different reasons.

Health Check

This part of the eye examination can detect medical conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma, and high blood pressure. As many as 40% of elderly people have an undetected visual problem and early diagnosis may aid their treatment and improve their quality of life.

Vision Check

Obviously the health of the eyes is very important, but sometimes the major cause of seriously blurred vision is simply the need for correct spectacles. 98% of those over 55 require spectacles to correct their vision. Uncorrected vision can cause just as much distress as blindness due to eye disease

In some cases, a huge difference can be made with the correct spectacles, in others pictures, photographs or meals may be made clearer. A lack of visual stimulation often makes the effects of age or dementia much worse. It is vital that residents are encouraged to wear the right spectacles at the right time.

Eye Examinations and Dementia

Eye examinations are vital for everyone, including those suffering from dementia. Research carried out by the Alzheimer's Association has found that the behavioural characteristics of failing eyesight are sometimes misdiagnosed as the early stages of Alzheimer's Disease.

An 'ordinary' eye examination may cause distress and confusion to those suffering from dementia and results can be unsatisfactory. It is essential that the eye examination is tailored to the individual and that special testing techniques are employed to cause minimal upset to the patient. Correct spectacles, can make a marked improvement on the behaviour and confusion levels of a dementia sufferer.

Our quality of life can be improved by having clearer vision. Everyone deserves the best possible vision.

Some Eye Conditions Commonly Affecting the Elderly

Cataract

A progressive clouding of the lens, which affects most people in some way when they grow older. In some cases the clouding can be significant and the vision becomes like looking through a frosted window. If the patient's health allows, a simple operation can be performed to remove the cataract and restore clarity of vision.

Glaucoma

Caused by a build up of pressure in the eye causing damage to the optic nerve. Commonly, the damage occurs over several years so is unnoticed by the patient until it's too late, resulting in tunnel vision or blindness. An optician can detect this disease long before the patient notices - if detected early it can be treated and the vision preserved.

You may notice a patient with glaucoma, turning their head or body to speak to you rather than simply their eyes, or bumping into objects that previously their peripheral vision would have detected.

All eye examinations for the over 40's should include a screening for glaucoma. This includes all in-home examinations, as specific portable equipment is available to carry out these specialised tests.