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Eye tests

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Summary

- Regular eye tests should be an essential part of your healthcare routine.
- Optometrists and ophthalmologists are healthcare professionals who can test your eyes, and diagnose and treat vision problems.
- You may need to have your eyes tested more frequently if you have a diagnosed eye condition or another type of medical condition that could affect your eyes.
- Scheduled screening of babies and children is available, but if you have concerns about your child's vision at any time, speak with your maternal and child health nurse or your doctor.
- If you wear contact lenses or you have an eye-related condition, you will need special tests to check your eye health.

Regular eye tests should be an essential part of your healthcare routine. Changes to the health of your eyes can happen gradually and you may not have any obvious signs of disease. Regular eye check-ups may help to detect problems at an early stage, which means you can start treatment as soon as possible to reduce the risk of any permanent damage to your eyes.

Optometrists and ophthalmologists are healthcare professionals who can test your eyes and diagnose and treat vision problems.

Reasons for eye tests

Everyone should have regular eye tests, although the frequency depends on your age, your health and your risk of developing eye problems. Optometrists generally recommend that you have an eye test every two years.

You may need to have your eyes tested more frequently if you have a medical condition such as:

- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- stroke
- neurological (brain and nerve) conditions.

You may also need a more frequent eye test if you have a diagnosed eye-related condition, such as:

- short-sightedness (myopia or near-sightedness) – difficulty focusing on objects that are in the distance
- long-sightedness (hyperopia) – difficulty focusing on objects that are close
- astigmatism – blurred or distorted vision at all distances
- macular degeneration – loss of vision in the centre of your field of view
- glaucoma – increased pressure in the eye that can cause loss of vision
- retinal detachment – the back layer of the eye (retina) separates from the layer of blood vessels
- cataracts – clouding of the lens of the eye.

It is also a good idea to have your child's eyes tested before they start school. Vision problems that are undetected may interfere with your child's ability to learn and develop. Your optometrist can carry out a comprehensive eye examination to make sure that your child's eyes are healthy.

Healthcare professionals who perform eye tests

Eye tests can be carried out by several types of eye healthcare professionals, including:

- Ophthalmologists (medical specialist doctor) diagnose and treat complex eye conditions and perform eye surgery. You will need a referral from your doctor or from an optometrist to see an ophthalmologist.
- Optometrists examine your eyes, test your vision, prescribe and dispense glasses and contact lenses. Some are licensed to prescribe medication to treat common eye diseases.
- Orthoptists dispense glasses and contact lenses, and when working in low vision clinics can assess your vision.

Types of eye tests

During your eye examination, your eye care professional will use a range of tests to determine how well you can see and the health of your eyes.

Regular eye tests

At a routine eye examination, your optometrist or ophthalmologist can:

- ask you about your eyes and vision, and your general health
- measure your ability to see at various distances (visual acuity)

- check how well you see colour
- monitor how your eyes react to light and movement
- measure the pressure inside your eyes
- examine the outer surface of your eyes with a powerful microscope (slit lamp).

Eye tests for children

It is important to have your baby or child's eyes checked to minimise the chance of problems with their vision. The Victorian Government provides free screening that is available:

- in hospital – after the birth of your baby, a doctor or other healthcare professional will shine a light in your baby's eyes
- at three and a-half years of age – the Maternal and Child Health Service offers the Melbourne Initial Screening Test (MIST).

When your child starts primary school, you will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire (the School Entrant Health Questionnaire). You will be asked if your child has had their vision screened (by MIST) or tested by your doctor.

If you have any concerns about your child's vision at any time, speak with your maternal and child health nurse or your doctor. If necessary, your doctor will suggest seeing an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

The optometrist or ophthalmologist will carry out a comprehensive eye examination and look for common problems, such as lazy eye (amblyopia), crossed eyes or turned-out eyes. These conditions need to be treated in childhood to minimise damage and permanent loss of vision in your child.

Contact lens consultation

Some people choose to wear contact lenses instead of glasses. You can ask your optometrist if contact lenses are appropriate for your visual needs. If contact lenses are an option for you, your eye healthcare professional will educate you and perform tests to make sure your eyes remain healthy when you wear contact lenses regularly.

During a contact lens consultation, your optometrist will:

- take your eye measurements and recommend a particular contact lens
- teach you how to insert, remove and care for your contact lenses
- ask you to return for a check-up.

If you wear contact lenses regularly and you do not clean your contact lenses properly, or you wear the contact lenses longer than recommended by the manufacturer, there is the potential for the clear front surface of your eye (cornea) to become damaged or become infected. Everyone who wears contact lenses regularly should go for frequent visits to have the health of their eyes checked.

Specialised eye tests

If you have a diagnosed eye-related condition, such as macular degeneration or glaucoma, or if you have diabetes or high blood pressure, you may need some specialised eye tests. Your optometrist or ophthalmologist may recommend:

- visual field test or perimetry – a check of your field of vision to detect areas of vision loss
- retinal imaging – a digital image of the back of your eyes
- optical coherence tomography (OCT) – a scan of the innermost area of your eye (retina).

Talk to your optometrist or ophthalmologist for more information.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Maternal and Child Health Line (24 hours) Tel. 132 229
- Optometrist
- Ophthalmologist
- Vision Australia Tel. 1399 84 74 66

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More information

Eyes

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- [Eye injuries and irritations](#)
- [Eye conditions](#)
- [Vision change and loss](#)
- [Vision aids and treatment](#)
- [Living with vision loss](#)

Eye basics

- [10 tips for good eye health](#)

[Most vision problems are avoidable or can be treated so have your eyes regularly checked by an optometrist or other eye care health professional...](#)

- [Eye care - optometrists](#)

[A standard eye examination with an optometrist includes a screening for all common eye diseases, such as glaucoma and cataracts...](#)

- [Eye care - orthoptists](#)

[Orthoptists assist in the diagnosis and treatment of eye disease...](#)

- [Eye safety at work](#)

[Wearing eye protection appropriate for the task can significantly reduce the risk of injury...](#)

- [Eyes - common problems](#)

[You can help prevent dry eyes and minimise the risk of tired or sore eyes while reading or using a computer...](#)

- [Eyes explained](#)

[The eye's complicated design means that an image can pass through its many layers and end up crisply focused on the retina...](#)

- [Eye tests](#)

[Regular eye tests or check-ups detect problems early, so you can have early treatment to minimise any permanent damage to your eyes...](#)

- [Short-sightedness](#)

[If you are short-sighted, you will have trouble seeing objects clearly in the distance and they will appear blurry...](#)

- [Smoking and eye disease](#)

[Smoking is thought to be a factor in age-related macular degeneration and blindness...](#)

Eye injuries and irritations

- [Dry eye](#)

[A person suffering from dry eye syndrome does not have enough of the right kind of tears to keep the eye comfortable...](#)

- [Eye floaters](#)

[Some eye floaters look like small dots, while others appear like threads or little hairy clumps...](#)

- [Eye injuries - chemical burns](#)

[Always wear safety goggles or a face shield when handling liquid or powder chemicals...](#)

- [Eye injuries - foreign body in the eye](#)

[Don't try to remove a foreign body from your eye - go to your doctor or hospital emergency department for help...](#)

- [Eyes - blocked tear duct](#)

[Some babies are born with a blocked tear duct, but other events, including infection and trauma to the nose, can cause a blocked tear duct...](#)

- [Eyes - flash burns](#)

[Flash burns are like sunburn in the eye and can affect both your eyes. Find out more...](#)

Eye conditions

- [Blepharospasm](#)

[Blepharospasm means involuntary twitching, blinking, closure or squeezing of the eyelids...](#)

- [Cataracts](#)

[A cataract of the eye is like the lens of a camera becoming fogged up...](#)

- [Colour blindness](#)

[People who are colourblind can't see some colours or see them differently from other people. Colour blindness is inherited, and affects more boys than girls. Out of 20 boys, it is likely that one or...](#)

- [Conjunctivitis](#)

[Conjunctivitis is an eye infection caused by a bacteria or virus. Symptoms include eye redness, a discharge and swollen lids. Conjunctivitis is treated with antibacterial eye drops or ointment...](#)

- [Diabetic retinopathy](#)
[Without treatment, diabetic retinopathy can cause loss of vision and blindness...](#)
- [Eyes - giant cell arteritis](#)
[Giant cell arteritis is inflammation of the arteries that can cause sudden blindness in one or both eyes...](#)
- [Eyes - glaucoma](#)
[Glaucoma can happen at any age and without early detection can lead to permanent vision loss and blindness...](#)
- [Eyes - optic neuritis](#)
[Optic neuritis is inflammation of the optic nerve that causes blurred, grey and dim vision...](#)
- [Eyes - retinitis pigmentosa](#)
[Retinitis pigmentosa is the collective name for a range of diseases that damage the retina and cause vision to fade...](#)
- [Eyes - trachoma](#)
[A clean face and clean environment are the best protection against trachoma...](#)
- [Eyes - uveitis](#)
[Iritis can cause vision problems if it is not treated...](#)
- [Pterygium](#)
[A pterygium is a fleshy overgrowth of the conjunctiva that may affect one or both eyes...](#)
- [Retinal detachment](#)
[If a detached retina is not treated, it can lead to total blindness...](#)

Vision change and loss

- [Eyes - age-related macular degeneration](#)
[Age-related macular degeneration \(AMD\) is a type of vision loss where there is a distortion or absence of the central field of vision...](#)
- [Eyes – long-sightedness](#)
[A significant amount of long-sightedness can lead to blurred vision, particularly for close objects...](#)
- [Eyes – refractive errors](#)
[Refractive errors are common eye disorders causing blurry vision and are related to the focusing ability of your eyes...](#)
- [Short-sightedness](#)
[If you are short-sighted, you will have trouble seeing objects clearly in the distance and they will appear blurry...](#)
- [Vision loss - neurological](#)
[Neurological vision impairment \(ABI VI\) is vision loss caused by damage to the areas of the brain that are responsible for sight...](#)

Vision aids and treatment

- [Corneal transplantation and donation](#)
[Corneal transplant surgery would not be possible without generous donors and their families, who have donated corneal tissue so that others may see...](#)
- [Eyes - contact lenses](#)
[Proper care of your contact lenses will help avoid irritation or damage to your eyes...](#)
- [Eyes - laser eye surgery](#)
[During laser eye surgery, a computer-controlled laser is used to remove microscopic amounts of tissue from the front surface of the eye...](#)
- [Vision therapy](#)
[Vision therapy is effective for everyone; however, its impact is greatest in children and young adults...](#)

Living with vision loss

- [Braille](#)
[Braille is a reading and writing system for blind and vision impaired people, made up of raised dots that can be 'read' by touch...](#)

- [Vision loss and sport](#)
[Many sports can be adapted to suit people who are blind or have low vision...](#)
- [Vision loss - living with a guide dog](#)
[Guide dogs are intelligent animals that thrive on the challenge of helping their handlers...](#)
- [Vision loss - occupational therapy](#)
[Occupational therapy for people with vision impairment offers new strategies and alternative ways to do things...](#)
- [Vision loss - offering assistance](#)
[When you meet a person who is blind or has low vision, ask them if they want help...](#)
- [Vision loss - recreational activities](#)
[Many recreational activities can be reworked to suit a person who is blind or has low vision...](#)
- [Vision loss - safety around the home](#)
[There are many ways to improve home safety for people whose vision is deteriorating...](#)
- [Vision loss - social events](#)
[With planning and preparation, most social events can be adapted to suit people with vision loss...](#)
- [Vision loss - training guide dogs](#)
[Guide dogs are specially bred and trained to enable people who are blind or vision impaired to achieve freedom and independence...](#)

Related Information

- [Body mass index calculator for children and teenagers](#)
This calculator measures body mass index (BMI), which is a measure of body fat. It is only an approximate measure of the best weight for your health. The calculator can be used for anyone from two to...
- [Hearing tests](#)
A ringing sensation in the ears (tinnitus), or people complaining that you talk too loudly are signs you may need to have your hearing checked...
- [Bowel cancer screening](#)
The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) offers kits for free to Australians between the ages of 50 and 74 years of age...
- [Cervical screening tests](#)
The cervical screening test protects up to 30 per cent more women than the Pap test...
- [Allergy testing](#)
Allergy testing is used to find which substances provoke an allergic reaction...

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Related information on other websites

- [Optometrists play an important role in your eye health – Optometry Australia](#)
- [Vision Screening – Department of Education and Training, Victorian Government](#)
- [What happens in an eye examination – Optometry Australia](#)
- [What is an eye test? – Vision Initiative](#)

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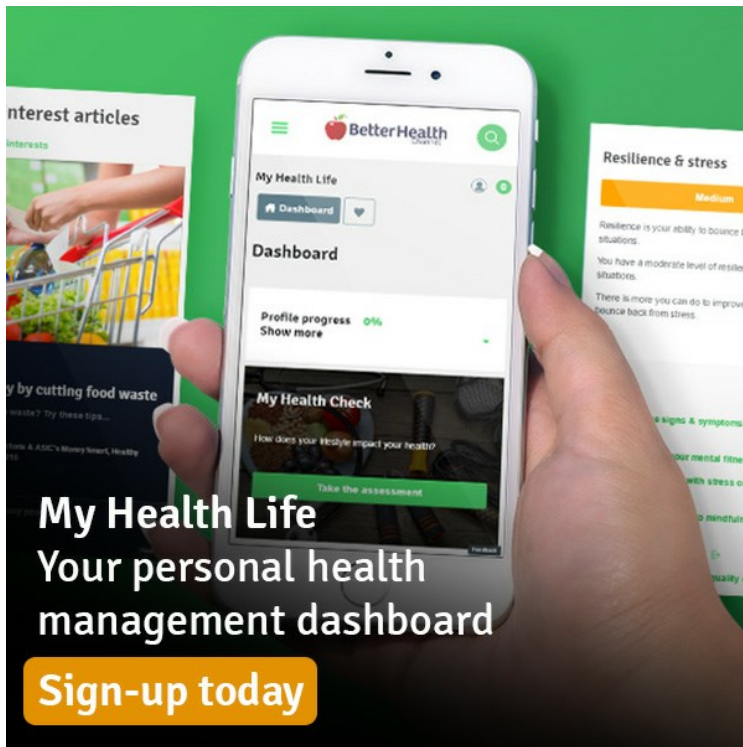


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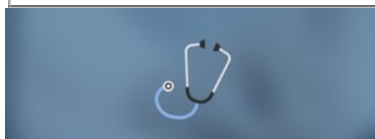
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