

## Healthy Vision

April's focus is on eye health. It's a great time to learn how to keep your eyes healthy and prevent vision loss. Eye doctors aren't just for people who need glasses or contacts. Even if you don't think you have any problems with your eyes or vision, you could have a problem and not even know it – many eye diseases don't have any symptoms or warning signs.

Participate in these fun activities throughout the month to learn more!



### Activity #1 – Eye Exam Recommendations

Several factors determine how frequently you need to have an eye exam, including your age, health and risk of developing eye problems. Review the eye exam recommendations on page two, learn the differences between the types of eye doctors, and schedule your routine eye exam if due.

### Activity #2 – Learn How Your Eyes Work

Did you know that vision depends on your brain as much as your eyes? Watch this short video on [how your eyes work](#). In addition, learn more about the retina and find out what's happening in the retina with this visual [afterimage activity](#).

### Activity #3 – Tips for Keeping Your Eyes Healthy

Read through the tip sheet on page three to learn about ways you can help keep your eyes healthy at any age and prevent vision loss.

### Activity #4 – Eye Health Crossword

Test your knowledge and complete the crossword puzzle on page four. Answers may or may not have been addressed in this packet, so just guess and learn something new.

For questions or more information, please email [wellness@wellfirstbenefits.com](mailto:wellness@wellfirstbenefits.com)

# Eye Exam Recommendations

An eye exam is an important part of staying healthy. Routine eye exams are the best way to detect eye problems at an early stage when they're easier to treat. Plus, an eye exam may provide clues about your overall health and other health conditions like, diabetes and hypertension, because of their effect on the blood vessels and nerves visible in the eye.

Several factors determine how frequently you need to have an eye exam, including your age, health and risk of developing eye problems. Experts are not in agreement about when or how often most individuals should have eye exams (with the exception of people with diabetes), but here are some general guidelines that the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends:

- **Children and Teens:** Your child's pediatrician will screen for eye problems and refer you to an ophthalmologist if needed.
- **Adults under 40:** Have a complete eye exam every 5 to 10 years if your eyes are healthy and your vision is good. If you wear contact lenses, see your eye doctor once a year.
- **Adults 40-65:** Have a baseline eye exam at 40 and continue with follow-ups as recommended by your eye doctor. Changes in vision and early signs of disease may begin to appear.
- **Adults over 65:** Have an eye exam every year or every other year.
- **If you have diabetes, you should have a full eye exam at least annually to check for early damage from diabetes.** This is critical to prevent blindness. Diabetes is the #1 cause of blindness in the United States.
- **Have your eyes checked regularly if you:**
  - Have a family history of eye diseases
  - Have hypertension
  - Wear glasses or contact lenses

Always check with your doctor about what's right for you and your family members. And follow the schedule that your eye doctor recommends for future exams. Remember to also check your medical benefit plan and/or vision insurance to know your coverage.

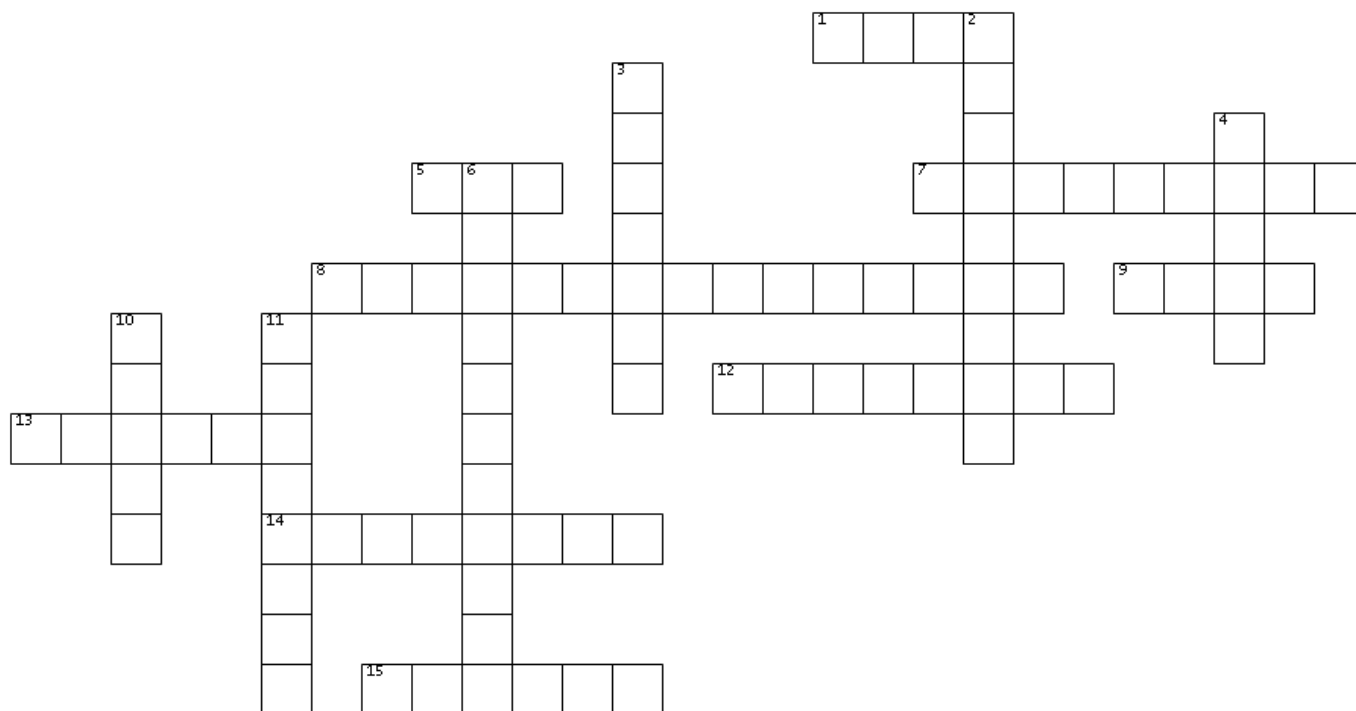
## What's the Difference?

Optometrist	Ophthalmologist
Doctor of Optometry (OD) Provides primary vision care such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eye exams</li><li>• Vision tests</li><li>• Prescriptions for glasses and lenses</li><li>• Diagnose and treat certain eye conditions</li></ul>	Medical doctor (MD) Provides the same services as an optometrist, plus they can also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diagnose and treat <i>all</i> eye conditions</li><li>• Perform eye surgery</li><li>• Conduct research on causes and cures for eye conditions and vision problems</li></ul>

# Tips to Keep Your Eyes Healthy

- **Get a routine eye exam:** Even if your eyes feel fine and your vision is good, you could have a problem and not know it since many eye diseases don't have any symptoms or warning signs. An exam is the only way to check for eye diseases, which are easier to treat if caught early.
- **Know your family's health history:** Some eye diseases and conditions like age-related macular degeneration or glaucoma run in families. Talk with family members to find out if they've had any eye problems and be sure to tell your doctor.
- **Take care of your overall health:** Healthy habits, like eating well and being active, can lower your risk for diseases and conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, that can lead to eye or vision problems.
  - **Eat healthy foods:** Include plenty of foods rich in beta-carotene such as carrots, red bell peppers, spinach, kale and collard greens in your diet. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, like salmon, tuna and halibut, are great for your eyes as well.
  - **Move your body regularly:** Being active can lower your risk of developing health conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, all of which can cause eye or vision problems.
- **Don't smoke:** Smoking is not only bad for your lungs – it can hurt your eyes too! Smoking increases the risk of eye diseases like macular degeneration and cataracts. It can also harm the optic nerve. All of these can lead to vision loss.
- **Protect your eyes from things that can harm them:**
  - **Wear sunglasses—even on cloudy days:** Look for sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB radiation.
  - **Wear protective eyewear at work and play:** Safety glasses and goggles are designed to protect your eyes when doing certain activities, like playing sports, doing home repairs or construction work.
  - **Give your eyes a rest:** Staring at digital screens, watching too much TV, or sitting too close to the TV, won't hurt or damage your eyes but it can make them feel dry and tired.
    - **Blink often:** We blink 15 times in one minute, but studies show that we blink about half as often when we're looking at a screen.
    - **Follow the 20/20/20 rule:** When looking at a screen, every 20 minutes, look at least 20 feet away, for at least 20 seconds.
    - **Adjust your screen:** Place your screen about 25 inches away (about arm's length) and slightly below eye level. Adjust the brightness and contrast as needed. To cut any glare, move light sources or use a screen filter.
    - **Digital device tip:** Set grayscale and blue light filters on your phone/digital devices.
  - **Prevent eye infection if you wear contacts:** Always wash your hands before putting them in and taking them out. Make sure to disinfect your contacts and replace them regularly.

# Eye Health Crossword



## ACROSS

1. Photoreceptor cell that helps you see colors.
5. Photoreceptor cell that helps you see at night.
7. Small part of your visual field where you can't see anything. (two words, no space)
8. Performs surgical treatment of eye conditions.
9. Muscles in this part of the eye control the size of the pupil.
12. The most common type of color blindness makes it hard to tell the difference between these two colors. (two words, no space)
13. Clear, domed-shaped front portion of the eye.
14. Term for when your eye's natural lens becomes cloudy.
15. Part of the eye that contains photoreceptors cells.

## DOWN

2. Keeps dust and debris out of your eyes.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ degeneration: medical condition that may result in blurred or no vision in the center of the visual field.
4. Nerve at the back of your eye that connects to your brain.
6. Specializes in primary care of the eyes.
10. Age when changes in vision and early signs of disease may appear.
11. Eye disease that damages the optic nerve and can cause vision loss.