

First Baptist Church Parish Nursing Notes Summer 2004

I know what I am doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for. When you call on me, when you pray to me, I'll listen.
Jeremiah 29: 11-12

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Prevention ~ The Key to Healthy Eyes

Good vision is a vital part of who we are and how we feel about life. We depend on sight more than any other sense to live an enjoyable, full life. As we age our vision changes naturally throughout our lives. We need to know what is natural and what is not.

For example, as we age:

- Our eyes need more light to see,
- It becomes harder to tell the difference between some colors, particularly shades of blue and green.
- It becomes more difficult to focus on things that are near,
- Adjusting to glare and darkness can become more troublesome.

We need to know what we can do to safeguard our sight.

The National Eye Institute (www.nei.nih.gov) has just released a study on vision loss from eye diseases that will occur as the population ages in the April issue of *Archives of Ophthalmology*. They reported blindness or low vision affects 3.3 million Americans age 40 and over. That number is expected to increase to 5.5 million by the year 2020. The study identifies age-related macular degeneration (AMD), glaucoma, cataract, and diabetic retinopathy as the most common eye diseases in this age group.

- They found that AMD is strongly associated with increasing age, particularly after age 60 and dramatically rises in whites over age 80; more than one in 10 white Americans over age 80 has vision loss from AMD.
- Cataract is the leading cause of low vision among all Americans, responsible for about 50% of the cases.
- One in every 12 people with diabetes age 40 and older has vision-threatening diabetic retinopathy.

Some common sense things that we can do to protect our sight are:

1. Wear appropriate eye protection while in the sun (both UVA & UVB) sunglasses, when using chemicals or doing other yard work or hobbies, and when playing sports like racquetball. The American Academy of Ophthalmology Web site www.aao.org gives a recommended list of sports eye protection.
2. Have regular eye exams. This is especially true for those with diabetes. A local retinal specialist said that it is critical for all persons with diabetes to have yearly eye exams.
3. Develop a healthy lifestyle. Eating a healthy, well-balanced diet decreases the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and elevated cholesterol, known contributors to eye disease. Eat a diet rich

in vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Some studies suggest that antioxidants and certain vitamins have a positive effect on eye health. Vitamin A, C, E, Zinc, and Lutein are a few suggested. A good multivitamin could help.

4. Exercise is a great help to prevention of all kinds of disease. As little as 10-20 minutes a day can make a difference. So get on those walking shoes.
5. Don't smoke. Smoking may increase the risk of both corneal infection in contact lens wearers and macular degeneration.

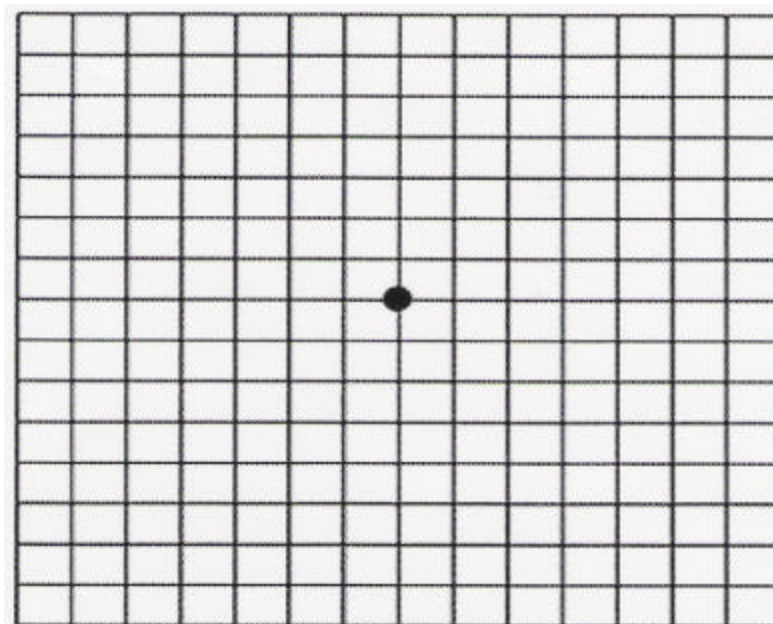
Emergency medical attention may be required from your eye-care professional if you have;

- a sudden loss of vision in one eye;
- sudden hazy or blurred vision;
- flashes of light or black spots;
- halos or rainbows around a light;
- and loss of peripheral (side) vision.

If one of these symptoms occurs, call your eye doctor at once. Do not wait and do not go to the emergency room expecting just anyone to know how to treat these situations.

Amsler Grid

The Amsler Grid for testing central vision is a useful tool. It is an important way to detect early and sometimes subtle visual changes in a variety of macular diseases. It is also helpful in monitoring changes in vision once they have been detected. Each eye is tested separately so that you can recognize symptoms, which are in one eye only.



Instructions for using the Amsler Grid

- Test your vision with adequate lighting.
- Wear your reading glasses or look through the reading portion of your bifocals (if you normally read with glasses)
- Hold the Amsler grid at normal reading distance (about 14 inches).
- Cover one eye at a time with the palm of your hand.
- Stare at the center dot of the chart at all times.
- Do not let your eye drift from the center dot.

Ask yourself the following questions as you check each eye separately:

- Are any of the lines crooked or bent?
- Are any of the boxes different in size or shape from the others?
- Are any of the lines wavy, missing, blurry, or discolored?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes” (and this is a new finding for you), you should contact your doctor immediately for an examination. Sometimes these changes may mean that there is leakage or bleeding in the back of the eye causing swelling of the retina.

You can go to the American Macular Degeneration Foundation at www.macular.org to print a grid and get more information.

Luke 11:34, (The Message) says, “Your eye is a lamp, lighting up your whole body. If you live wide-eyed in wonder and belief, your body fills with light.” Let’s take good care of your eyes both Spiritually and physically.

Eugenia Evans RN,BS, Parish Nurse