



HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
Trusted advice for a healthier life

Warning signs of a serious eye problem

Eyes aren't exempt from the wear and tear of aging. Some of the age-related changes in the eyes are annoying but not serious — for example, it can become difficult to focus on near objects, and eyelashes may thin out a bit. But other changes can threaten vision.

With age, the eyes' ability to stay lubricated starts to wane. This can leave eyes feeling irritated, sticky, dry, or gritty. The lens of the eye can become less elastic. Night vision may also start to suffer, which can pose problems when driving at night. In contrast, cataract, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy can rob you of your sight.

How do you know if an eye problem is a nuisance or the start of something serious? The following signs and symptoms warrant a call to your doctor. Catching serious eye problems early can help preserve your vision. Even non-vision-threatening problems can be treated to keep your eyes comfortable and your eyesight as sharp as possible.

Call your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- Change in iris color
- Crossed eyes
- Dark spot in the center of your field of vision
- Difficulty focusing on near or distant objects
- Double vision
- Dry eyes with itching or burning
- Episodes of cloudy vision
- Excess discharge or tearing
- Eye pain
- Floaters or flashers
- Growing bump on the eyelid
- Halos (colored circles around lights) or glare
- Hazy or blurred vision
- Inability to close an eyelid
- Loss of peripheral vision
- Redness around the eye

- Spots in your field of vision
- Sudden loss of vision
- Trouble adjusting to dark rooms
- Unusual sensitivity to light or glare
- Veil obstructing vision
- Wavy or crooked appearance to straight lines