

# THE EYE TIMES

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ANNUAL EYE EXAM

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Routine eye exams are an important tool in maintaining your physical health. For many people, an annual eye exam means that it is time for a new prescription for glasses or contact lenses. Even though a new prescription is an important aspect of your annual exam, it's not the only important item that will be addressed during your exam.

During your annual eye exam your doctor is checking not only the vision portion on your eyes, but your eyes overall health as well. With tests that can be run in the office, your optometrist can sometimes be the first to detect chronic diseases such as glaucoma, high blood pressure and even diabetes.

But how can these diseases affect your vision you might ask?

Glaucoma is a condition that causes damage to your eyes optic nerve, often associated with an

excessive buildup of pressure inside the eye. The increased pressure, called intraocular pressure, can damage the optic nerve. Without treatment, glaucoma can cause total and permanent blindness within a few years.

High blood pressure can cause damage to the blood vessels in the retina, which is the area at the back of your eye where the images focus. This can cause them to burst or bleed. Not only will it impair vision, but it may also cause blindness.

Diabetes that is not under control can also damage the blood vessels in your eyes. When blood sugar levels are high for a long period of time, water from your body is pulled into the lens, causing them to swell. When this excessive fluid builds up, it

can cause blurry vision, vision complications and even vision loss.

About 20.6 million Americans experience vision loss each year, due to health issues, and for these reasons, it is important to get your annual eye exam.



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