



# 4 Most Common Ocular Diseases in the Elderly

- ✓ **Macular Degeneration**
- ✓ **Diabetes**
- ✓ **Glaucoma**
- ✓ **Cataracts**

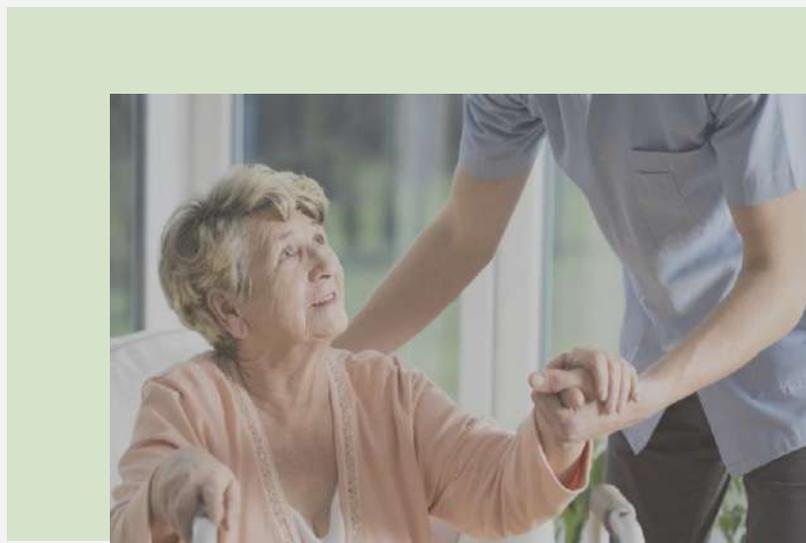
# Macular Degeneration



**Macular degeneration is the name given to a group of chronic, degenerative retinal eye diseases that cause progressive loss of central vision, leaving the peripheral or side vision intact.**

**It is possible to have very early signs of macular degeneration without even knowing. Therefore it is important to recognise any of the following noticeable symptoms:**

- Having difficulty reading or any other activities which requires fine vision
- Distortion where straight lines appear wavy or bent
- Difficulty distinguishing faces
- Dark patches or empty spaces appear in the centre of your vision
- The need for increased illumination, sensitivity to glare, decreased night vision and poor colour sensitivity may also indicate something is wrong

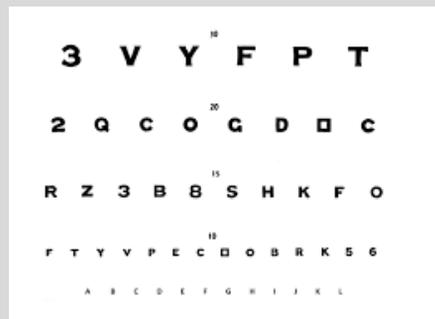


# Early Detection, Prevention and Prevalence

**Early Detection** – Early detection which can be achieved through eye examinations enables an individual to begin treatment options that can slow down its progression and help manage associated complications. Early detection of any form of macular generation is crucial to saving sight. Difficulty with vision should never be dismissed as just a part of getting older.

**Prevention** – In the early stages macular degeneration may not result in noticeable visual symptoms but it can be detected with an eye test. The earlier that macular degeneration is detected the earlier that steps can be undertaken to help slow its progression and save sight through treatment and/or lifestyle modifications.

**Prevalence**- In Australia today, there are 1.25 million people who have some prevalence of macular degeneration and 8 million Australians who are “at risk.”



# Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy occurs when the tiny blood vessels inside the retina at the back of the eye are damaged as a result of diabetes. This can seriously affect vision and in some cases cause blindness.



## Early Signs

Individuals who have diabetes are at risk especially if they have:

- High blood sugar levels or poorly managed diabetes
- High blood pressure, particularly if they also have kidney disease
- A long history of diabetes

Some of the most common symptoms include :

- Blurred or distorted vision that makes it difficult to read standard print, watch television or see people's faces
- Increased sensitivity to glare and difficulty seeing at night time

## Reduce the Risk

Individuals with diabetes are able to reduce the risk of vision loss from diabetic retinopathy by:

- Seeing an eyecare professional regularly
- Taking prescribed medication as instructed
- Controlled blood-sugar levels and following a healthy diet
- Having 6 monthly eye examinations





## Sensible Screening Stages:

- **Adults with type 1 diabetes** have a dilated eye exam within five years of their diabetes diagnosis
- **People with type 2 diabetes** have a dilated eye exam at the time of their diabetes diagnosis
- **People with type 1 and 2** have annual dilated eye exams. If there is no evidence of retinopathy for one or more annual exams and blood glucose is well managed, doctors may recommend eye exams every two years
- **Women with diabetes** receive an eye exam before becoming pregnant or in the first trimester. Pregnancy can hasten the start or progression of diabetic retinopathy
- **Kids who have had type 1 diabetes** for three to five years should get a comprehensive eye exam at age 10 or after puberty has begun, whichever is earlier

# Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a common form of eye disease that often runs in families. It affects the optic nerve connecting the eye to the brain. It is often caused by high intraocular pressure, a result of a blockage in the eye's drainage system.

## Who is Most at Risk?

- Those with a family history of glaucoma
- Are aged 40 and over
- Are short sighted
- Have diabetes
- Have had a serious injury to the eye
- Used steroids regularly over a long period of time
- Have hypertension

## What are Some Early Signs?

The most common form of glaucoma starts with the loss of side vision (peripheral vision). There is no pain or discomfort associated with it. The lack of symptoms makes early detection difficult. As the disease progresses, symptoms may include:

- Painless blurred vision
- Loss of peripheral vision
- Difficulty adjusting to low light

# Prevention

Due to limited associated pain and discomfort, a lack of symptoms makes early detection of glaucoma difficult. As the disease progresses, symptoms may include:

- Poor vision in dim light which may lead to falls or a loss of confidence
- If untreated, the continued loss of peripheral vision can lead to tunnel vision or blindness



# Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the clear lens in the eye and is one of the leading causes of vision impairment. While cataracts most commonly occur in those who are older, they can develop in younger people as well. Some individuals are born with a cataract.



## Early Signs

In the early stages, a cataract may not cause vision problems. However, some of the common signs associated with advanced cataracts include:

- Glare sensitivity
- Blurred vision
- A feeling of looking through a curtain or veil
- Distortion or double vision

## How To Fix Cataracts

Cataract surgery is one of the most common and successful surgical procedures performed in Australia.

The surgery entails the cloudy lens (cataract) is removed and replaced with an artificial lens implant called an intraocular lens (IOL).

**Many different types of IOLs are available to suit different people.**

When surgery is not an option, the use of low vision aids, advice and information can assist.

## Frequenting an Eye Exam

Individuals at risk should be attending an eye examination when necessary. Individuals at risk are those if they have:

- A family history of the condition
- Been diagnosed with diabetes
- Had an injury to the eye
- Exposed their eyes to sunlight without protection over a long period
- Smoked for a period of time