



#Love Your Eyes: Open your eyes to the need for proactive eye care

Did you know that 75% of eye disorders and diseases can be treated or even prevented if caught early? Which means that, of the estimated 254 million people in the world who are either blind or visually impaired, more than 190 million could have avoided it.

Speaking at an event to commemorate World Sight Day on 13 October 2022, Spec-Savers Canal Walk optometrist, Wesley Language, said that many people are not aware that eye disorders and diseases can be treated or even prevented if caught early. "Many eye diseases and conditions do not have obvious signs or symptoms, especially when they are in the early stages. Having a professional eye examination every 24 months means that you will catch an eye disorder early, allowing timely treatment which dramatically improves the long-term prognosis."

Here are a few of the reasons why regular eye exams are a must:

It helps detect eye problems early

Even if you score 20/20 on a vision test, you may still have the early onset of eye problems – and the key to keeping good vision for a lifetime starts with early detection and early treatment. Some sight-threatening eye diseases do not have early warning signs, and many can only be detected during an eye exam as vision screenings at your school or workplace will not identify these. For example, some cataracts affect vision in such a gradual way that you do not notice the decreased vision, and half of all people with glaucoma, a disease that leads to partial blindness, are unaware that they even have the disease.

It helps detect serious health problems early too

Your eyesight is perfect, your hearing is perfect, you feel as healthy as a horse, which means you probably haven't been to the doctor in years and that could be a problem. You may be developing high blood pressure or diabetes without realising it. Surviving many serious health conditions depends on early detection, and by the time you start noticing symptoms and finally get to a doctor, there may be complications that are difficult or impossible to fix.

Fortunately, health problems are often first detected during a routine eye exam because the eye is the only place where blood vessels can be viewed in their natural state without a surgical procedure. Changes in the blood vessels of the eye or fluctuations in vision sometimes lead to the first diagnosis of common diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol – and even multiple sclerosis, cancer and brain tumours may first be detected during an eye exam.

Vision affects a child's success in life

Did you know that 80% of all learning is through the visual system, and decreased vision can significantly affect educational success, athletic ability and even social interaction? Countless children are getting poor grades simply because they cannot see the blackboard, causing them to lose a desire to learn and even stunting their social skills. While most parents recognise the value of routine dental care, they often underestimate the importance of testing a child's vision. In fact, it is so important that Spec-Savers offers free eye tests, lenses and frames to all South African children between six and 12 years of age through their [Kids Right to Good Sight](#) initiative.

Digital eye strain

Modern technology has led to a dramatic increase in screen time for all ages, with much of our work, school and social lives now happening on a screen or device. We recommend using adequate lighting and reducing glare; adjusting your monitor's brightness, contrast and colour monitor display settings; and regularly resting your eyes while working on a screen. Keep the 20/20/20 rule in mind: every 20 minutes look away from your screen at something that is 20 feet (6 metres) away from you for 20 seconds. This allows your eyes to relax and can alleviate symptoms.

Your optometrist can also help ease the strain by prescribing customised blue light computer glasses. These lead to visual improvement, reduce symptoms caused by glare exposure and will correct any astigmatism you may have.

Relief from dry eyes

Did you know dry eye symptoms are one of the top reasons people visit the optometrist? There are over-the-counter remedies to help relieve the burning, irritation and general discomfort associated with dry eye, but it's important to understand the underlying reason behind them. Dry eyes are more than just uncomfortable: they can impact your vision and the overall health of your eye. There have been important advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of dry eye, so don't ignore those dry eye symptoms – get them checked and find instant relief.

Screening for sun damage

Every day we are exposed to the sun's UV rays. While sun damage is more closely linked to skin cancer, the threat to your eyes is just as significant. While wearing UV-blocking sunglasses is essential (remember to look for sunglasses labelled UV 400), it's important that your optometrist screens regularly for the potential risks from sun exposure such as macular degeneration and cataracts.

Wesley cautions that it's also important not to ignore symptoms of eye disorders or diseases. "Visit your Spec-Savers optometrist as soon as possible if you have decreased vision, eye pain, drainage or redness of the eye, double vision, diabetes, or if you see flashes of light, floaters (tiny specks that appear to float before your eyes), or circles (halos) around light sources."

Your eyes are among your greatest assets, allowing you to embrace the world and all its beauty around you. Proactively looking after them is paramount and dedicating an hour of your time every 24 months to this incredible organ is the smart thing to do! Spec-Savers makes it easy: book [online](#) at any of their [300 stores](#) around the country – and start your eye care journey today!

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Notes to Editors

Spec-Savers is the leading optometry group in South Africa with over 300 stores nationwide. Established in 1993, the brand is dedicated to delivering affordable eye care to the Southern African public, without compromising either quality or professional standards. Since 2008, Spec-Savers has helped over 320 000 children through its *Kids Right to Good Sight* initiative, which offers a free eye examination, pair of frames and clear lenses for children aged 6 to 12 years to dramatically improve their lives.
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