

## **Eye health is crucial for overall wellness**

AS we slowly regain normalcy in our day-to-day activities during this transition to endemicity, routine health check-ups should be a priority once more.

Most individuals are concerned about the health of their heart, lungs and kidneys. However, after more than two years of adjusting our routines to working and studying from home, socialising and shopping online, our eye health would have been affected.

According to research conducted by the National Eye Survey Malaysia, 15,000 individuals were examined for blindness in 2018, and 58.6 per cent of them were diagnosed with untreated cataracts that could have been prevented if they had been detected earlier.

Additional research from the National Eye Census in 2014 by the **Department of Statistics Malaysia** identified 413,000 Malaysians aged 50 and above as having some type of visual impairment while 113,000 were permanently blind, with 43,000 cases caused by severe cataracts which could have been prevented by an early eye examination.

Adults aged 18 and above should undergo consultations with an optometrist once every two years for a comprehensive eye examination.

Most eye-related diseases are silent killers and will be untreatable if we don't act now, says optometrist Yoyo Foong from optical retailer MOG Boutique.

"Generally, adults who do not have any vision-related issues should see an optometrist at least once every two years to upkeep vision health. However, since our screen time has drastically increased due to the pandemic and in addition to changes in our lifestyle, we need to reconsider and prioritise our eye condition with a professional eye examination as often as once a year," says Foong.

If you are already a wearer of prescription glasses or contact lenses, you will need to schedule an eye examination to replace your vision aid at least once every two years.

Several factors can determine how often you need an eye examination, including your age, health conditions and family history of eye diseases. Below is a general guide for Malaysians to understand the importance of eye examinations.

### 1. Children

Eye examinations for children are not only to detect or prevent eye diseases from developing but to also foster their brain-vision coordination. Similar to walking or talking, vision development is a learned skill that helps in accomplishing daily tasks ranging from reading to catching and throwing a ball.

However, if a child's vision is underdeveloped, it could seriously hinder their learning abilities. Care for your eyes from a young age for optimum performance in your day-to-day activities.

### 2. Eye care is our responsibility

Many people will not notice any signs or symptoms in the early stages of an eye disease and they are mostly unaware that age is an influencing factor in eye condition and vision wellness.

Age-related diseases such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD) may start to progress earlier during your lifespan if not detected or treated, hence the need to pay attention to eye health and take notice of any minor eye discomfort or vision changes, such as:

- \* Trouble distinguishing colours;
- \* Needing time to adjust to changing levels of light;
- \* Losing the ability to see up-close.

Should you experience these warning signs, make an appointment for a thorough eye exam to receive appropriate treatment and rule out any serious conditions.

Get an eye exam the moment you experience minor eye discomfort or vision changes

A proper eye check-up is crucial.

### 3. Common problems of ageing eyes

There are four known eye conditions that will start to rapidly develop as you enter the golden years of 50 - 65 years old.

AMD, diabetic retinopathy, cataract and glaucoma. Those in this age group are advised to undergo regular check-ups with their optometrist every year to maintain good eye health.

### 4. Take care of your eyes

Eye health is important for overall wellness and should not be neglected. While the three Os (optometrists, ophthalmologists and opticians) can assist you in detecting and preventing eye diseases, the ultimate responsibility lies with you to ensure your eyes are in good health.

Caring for your eyes is not as complicated as it may seem and there are a few things you can do to protect your vision:

- \* Eat a healthy and balanced diet
- \* Get regular exercise
- \* Wear sunglasses to protect from UVA/UVB radiation
- \* Avoid smoking
- \* Only buy contact lenses from reliable optical stores
- \* Give your eyes a rest (20-20-20 rule: For every 20 minutes spent looking at a screen, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds)

<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/heal/2022/05/794334/eye-health-crucial-overall-wellness>

