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## **May is Healthy Vision Month**

Eyesight is one of our most valuable possessions. It allows us to see the people and things we love. It is a treasure that we need to protect.

May is Healthy Vision Month, time to focus on your eyesight. Get a thorough eye exam!

Vision loss is one of the top 10 disabilities in adults 18 years and older. It is also one of the most feared disabilities among older adults because eye disease and vision loss often lead to injury and a loss of independence.

Preventive eye care is necessary to avoid eye conditions and diseases that can rob you and your family members of healthy vision. People of all ages, from infants and toddlers to seniors, should be screened for common eye problems.

Infants and toddlers should be checked for strabismus (crossed eyes) and amblyopia (lazy eye) during regular pediatric appointments. Adults should be screened for the four leading age-related eye diseases: macular degeneration (central vision loss due to degeneration of cells), glaucoma, cataract and diabetic retinopathy (damage to the retina caused by complications of diabetes). The national surge in the number of cases of diabetes among children and adolescents has increased their risk for retinopathy.

Regular eye examinations, at least once every other year, are important. Early stages of eye disease often have no apparent symptoms. So, even if you think you can see well, a regular, complete eye exam is necessary to protect your sight.

People at higher risk for eye disease, including African-Americans over age 40 (especially glaucoma), those over age 60 (macular degeneration and cataracts) and people with a family history of eye problems, should check with their eye doctor to find out how often they need an eye exam.

The New York State Department of Health recommends that people with diabetes receive a dilated eye exam every year from an eye care professional. People receiving Medicare benefits are entitled to a free comprehensive eye exam and up to one year of follow-up care for any condition diagnosed at the initial exam.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle and taking precautions to avoid eye injuries can help your vision last a lifetime.

The State Health Department recommends increasing your daily servings of vegetables and fruit and three or more servings of low-fat milk or other low-fat dairy products or calcium rich foods every day. You also should avoid tobacco, engage in regular physical activity, control your blood pressure and protect your eyes from the ultraviolet rays of the sun by wearing sunglasses when outdoors.

Everyone should wear protective eyewear when playing sports, working with chemicals or participating in any activity that could cause an eye injury. It's particularly important to remind children to wear protective eye gear when outdoors.

For more information, visit on-line at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or call:

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