

Problems You Can Have With Your Eyes: FAQ

Q: My grandmother can't see very well – she's going to have an operation which will help her. Her eyes are kind of cloudy – what are they going to do?

A: It sounds like she is going to have a 'cataract' operation to replace the lens of her eye which has become cloudy with age.

Q: I have to squint to see things far away. My eye doctor says I need glasses. What is this called?

A: The doctor may have said you had 'myopia' or near sightedness. This when an image is in focus in front of the retina, rather than right on it. Glasses will help you read the blackboard!

Q: When I try to read, things are fuzzy. I can see things far away. Will I need glasses?

A: This sounds like 'hyperopia' or farsightedness. It is less common in kids, but is easily corrected with glasses you can use when you read.

Q: My Dad has contact lenses. Can kids get them?

A: Children's eyes change rapidly, so it would be expensive to keep up with the changes. Because 'contacts' sit right on your eye, they have to fit perfectly. Contacts require special care and cleaning to keep your eye safe. Most people wait till high school to try contacts – they are not for everybody!

Q: I have a friend who can't see reds or greens. Is he color blind?

A: Most people who can't tell the difference between certain colors are males who are born with the problem. They don't really notice it because they never knew what the colors were! There are different kinds of 'color blindness' which your school nurse or eyedocor can test for. It is worth knowing if you are color blind, since some warning lights are red.

Q: My parents always tell me to turn the lights on when I read. Is dim light bad for my eyes?

A: There is no research which says low light will hurt your eyes. You may just be more comfortable!

Q: I got sent home from school for pink eye – whats the big deal?

A: ‘Conjunctivitis’ or pink eye is an infection or irritation of the outer covering of the eye. Sometimes it is very itchy and can spread easily to other people. Any infection in or on the eye is serious in that it can cause damage to how well you see.

Q: I got hit in the eye with a rubber ball and it really hurts. Should I see a doctor?

A: Because your eyes are precious, yes. You could have a scratched outer covering of the eye – the cornea- which the doctor can only see with a special dye and light they shine in your eye.

Q: What are the floating things which I can sometimes see when I close my eyes and look at a bright light?

‘Floaters’ are bits of material which will be slowly reabsorbed by the fluids in your eye, but they block some light when it comes into your eye. The older you get, the more bits are floating around your eyes. They are usually harmless, but if you have lots as a child, tell your eye doctor.

Q: What is an eye doctor called?

A: An *Ophthalmologist* (MD) has a medical degree and is licensed to practice medicine and perform eye surgery. An ophthalmologist has had at least 12 years of education and training beyond high school and is qualified to diagnose and treat all eye diseases; perform surgery; prescribe and fit glasses and contact lenses.

An *Optometrist* (OD) has a degree in optometry and is licensed to practice optometry. An optometrist has had at least six years of education and training beyond high school and is qualified to determine the need for glasses and contact lenses; prescribe optical correction; and screen for some eye conditions.

An *Optician* usually has a combination of college (or two years of opticianry school) and on-the-job training. An optician is trained to fit and dispense eyeglasses or contact lenses based upon a prescription from a license.