

Eye Care



What to Expect

The first step to maintaining your eye health and preventing potential vision problems is scheduling and attending routine eye exams.

Whether you have perfect vision or wear corrective lenses, regular visits to an eye care professional will track any changes in your eyesight and prevent conditions from worsening.

Regular eye exams do more than check your ability to see clearly. An eye exam provides insight into your overall health, as many systemic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol can be detected through the eyes. Eye doctors can often spot these issues during a routine exam, sometimes even before symptoms appear in other parts of the body.

Moreover, eye exams can detect common vision problems such as nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism. They help diagnose more serious conditions like glaucoma, cataracts and macular degeneration, which can lead to vision loss if left untreated. Early detection preserves eyesight, as prompt care manages many conditions more effectively.

Aetna explains that eyes give doctors a clear view of blood vessels, which is why it



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provides a window into a person's general health.

“Our eyes are amazing — they offer a unique view into the human body,” said John Lahr, M.D., a medical director with EyeMed Vision Care. “A thorough exam can spot serious problems such as diabetes, lupus, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and eye diseases like glaucoma and macular degeneration.”

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING AN EYE EXAM

A standard eye exam involves several tests to evaluate different aspects of vision

and eye health. Your doctor will ask about your medical history, any vision issues and any symptoms.

You'll likely undergo a visual acuity test, where you'll read letters off an eye chart to measure how clearly you can see. The doctor may perform a refraction test to determine whether you need prescription lenses. A slit-lamp exam, which uses a special microscope, allows the doctor to examine the front part of your eyes for any abnormalities.

Other tests may include a glaucoma screening, which measures the pressure inside

your eyes, and a retinal exam, where the doctor examines the back of your eye, including the retina, optic nerve and blood vessels.

WHEN TO SCHEDULE AN EYE EXAM

The frequency of eye exams depends on your age, health and risk factors. The American Optometric Association recommends that adults between the ages of 18 and 60 get an eye exam every two years, and annually after the age of 60. However, individuals with existing vision problems, a family history of eye disease

or chronic conditions like diabetes should have their eyes examined more frequently.

Children should have their first comprehensive eye exam at six months old, followed by another at age three and before they start school. Afterward, eye exams are scheduled every two years unless a doctor recommends otherwise.

Taking the time to schedule regular eye exams is an investment in long-term health. By catching vision problems early, you can ensure that your eyesight — and overall health — remains in good shape.

How Diabetes Affects Your Eyes

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects millions of people worldwide, and it can have serious implications for your eye health.

High blood sugar levels associated with diabetes can damage the blood vessels in the eyes, leading to a variety of vision problems.

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

One of the most common and serious eye conditions caused by diabetes is diabetic retinopathy. This condition occurs when high blood sugar levels damage the tiny blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. Over time, these damaged vessels can leak fluid or blood, leading to vision problems.

In the early stages, diabetic retinopathy may not cause any noticeable symptoms. As the condition progresses, you might experience blurred vision, floaters, dark spots or even sudden vision loss.

Managing blood sugar levels is the most effective way to prevent diabetic retinopathy. Regular eye exams are essential for early detection. If diagnosed, treatments such as laser therapy, injections or surgery can help manage the condition and prevent further vision loss.

DIABETIC MACULAR EDEMA (DME)

Diabetic macular edema is a complication of diabetic retinopathy that occurs when fluid accumulates in the macula, the part of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision. This fluid buildup causes the macula to swell,



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leading to blurred vision.

Blurry vision, particularly in the center of your field of vision, is the primary symptom of DME. Controlling blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels can help reduce the risk of DME. Treatment options include anti-VEGF injections, which reduce fluid leakage, and laser therapy to seal leaking blood vessels.

CATARACTS

People with diabetes are at an increased risk of developing cataracts at a younger age. A cataract is a clouding

of the eye's lens, which can cause blurry vision and sensitivity to light.

Blurry or cloudy vision, difficulty seeing at night, and seeing halos around lights are common symptoms of cataracts. While cataracts can't be entirely prevented, managing diabetes effectively can slow their development. When cataracts interfere with daily activities, surgery to replace the clouded lens with an artificial one is often recommended.

GLAUCOMA

Diabetes increases the risk of

glaucoma, a group of eye conditions that damage the optic nerve. The most common form, open-angle glaucoma, occurs when the eye's drainage system becomes clogged, leading to increased pressure in the eye.

Glaucoma often develops slowly and painlessly, with no noticeable symptoms until significant vision loss has occurred.

Regular eye exams are key to detecting glaucoma early. Treatments include medications, laser therapy, and surgery to lower eye pressure and prevent further damage.

Symptoms and Solutions

Vision problems are a common concern for many people, affecting individuals of all ages.

While some issues are minor and can be easily corrected, others may require ongoing management or more intensive treatment.

NEARSIGHTEDNESS (MYOPIA)

Nearsightedness, or myopia, occurs when the eyeball is too long or the cornea is too curved, causing light to focus in front of the retina. As a result, distant objects appear blurry while close objects remain clear.

The International Myopia Institute says myopia is becoming more common. Around 30% of the world is estimated to have myopia and researchers predict it will be at 50% by 2050.

Symptoms: Difficulty seeing distant objects, such as road signs or a chalkboard; squinting; headaches; eye strain.

Solutions: Corrective lenses, such as glasses or contact lenses, are the most common solution. For those seeking a more permanent fix, LASIK surgery, which reshapes the cornea, can correct myopia in many cases.

FARSIGHTEDNESS (HYPEROPIA)

Farsightedness, or hyperopia, is the opposite of myopia. It occurs when the eyeball is too short or the cornea has too little



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curvature, causing light to focus behind the retina. This condition makes nearby objects appear blurry, while distant objects are usually seen more clearly.

The Cleveland Clinic reports that hyperopia affects about 4.6% of children and 30.9% of adults.

Symptoms: Blurry vision when looking at close objects; difficulty with reading; eye strain; headaches, especially after prolonged periods of close work.

Solutions: Like myopia, hyperopia is often corrected with glasses or contact lenses. Refractive surgery, such as LASIK, can also be an option,

depending on the severity of the condition.

ASTIGMATISM

Astigmatism is a condition where the cornea is irregularly shaped, causing light to be focused unevenly on the retina. This can lead to distorted or blurred vision at all distances.

The American Academy of Ophthalmology reports that 33% of people in the U.S. have astigmatism.

Symptoms: Blurred or distorted vision; difficulty seeing at night; eye strain; headaches; squinting.

Solutions: Glasses or contact lenses are typically prescribed to correct astigmatism. Toric

lenses, designed specifically for astigmatism, can provide more accurate vision correction. Refractive surgery, such as LASIK or PRK, can also correct astigmatism in many cases.

PRESBYOPIA

Presbyopia is an age-related condition that affects nearly everyone over the age of 40. It occurs when the lens of the eye becomes less flexible, making it difficult to focus on close objects.

Symptoms: Difficulty reading small print; needing to hold reading material farther away; eye strain; headaches when doing close work.

Solutions: Reading glasses

are the most common solution for presbyopia. Bifocals, trifocals, and progressive lenses can also correct presbyopia along with other vision issues, such as myopia or hyperopia. Multifocal contact lenses are another option. Some people opt for monovision LASIK, where one eye is corrected for distance vision and the other for near vision.

CATARACTS

Cataracts are a clouding of the eye's lens, leading to decreased vision. They are most associated with aging, but can also be caused by injury, certain medications or medical conditions like diabetes.

Worldwide, about 17% of people have cataracts, according to the World Health Organization. In the U.S., close to one in five people aged 65 to 74 have cataracts that are severe enough to affect their vision. More than half of people over the age of 80 either have cataracts or had surgery to remove them, according to the Cleveland Clinic.

Symptoms: Blurry or cloudy vision; difficulty seeing at night; sensitivity to light; seeing halos around lights; fading or yellowing of colors.

Solutions: In the early stages, stronger lighting and new glasses can help manage cataracts. However, as cataracts progress, surgery is often needed. Cataract surgery, which involves removing the clouded lens and replacing it with an artificial lens, is a common and generally safe procedure.

The Style for Your Face Shape

Finding the perfect pair of glasses isn't just about correcting your vision; it's also about enhancing your personal style.

With countless frames available in different shapes, sizes and colors, choosing the right glasses can feel overwhelming. However, by considering your face shape, you can find a pair that not only suits your prescription needs but also complements your features, creating a balanced and stylish look.

IDENTIFYING YOUR FACE SHAPE

There are generally six common face shapes:

- **Oval:** An oval face is longer than it is wide, with a slightly curved jawline and a forehead that is slightly wider than the chin.

- **Round:** A round face has soft, curved lines with the width and length in roughly equal proportions. The cheeks are typically full, and the jawline is rounded without sharp angles.

- **Square:** Square faces are characterized by a strong jawline, broad forehead and square chin. The width and length of the face are roughly equal.

- **Heart:** A heart-shaped face has a broad forehead and cheekbones with a narrow, pointed chin. This may also be referred to as a "triangle" shape.



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- **Diamond:** Diamond-shaped faces have high, pronounced cheekbones with a narrow forehead and chin. This face shape is the rarest and is characterized by its angular features.

- **Oblong:** An oblong face is longer than it is wide, with a long, straight cheek line and sometimes a longer nose. The chin may be slightly rounded or more pointed.

CHOOSING FRAMES FOR YOUR FACE SHAPE

Once you've identified your

face shape, the next step is to choose frames that enhance your natural features:

- Since an oval face is well-balanced, you can experiment with a variety of frame styles. Square, rectangular and geometric shapes work well, as they add structure and contrast to the natural curves of your face. Avoid frames that are too large, as they can overwhelm your features.

- To add definition to a round face, opt for angular

frames such as rectangular or square styles. These shapes create the illusion of a longer, slimmer face. Avoid round frames, as they can make your face appear even rounder.

- Round or oval frames can soften the strong angles of a square face, adding balance and a touch of contrast. Look for frames that sit high on the bridge of your nose to elongate your face. Avoid square or angular frames, which can make your face appear boxier.

- To balance a wider

forehead and narrow chin, choose frames that are wider at the bottom or have a light-colored, rimless design. Cat-eye frames can also be flattering, as they draw attention away from the forehead. Avoid frames that are top-heavy, as they can exaggerate the width of your forehead.

- Oval and cat-eye frames work well with diamond-shaped faces, as they highlight the cheekbones and soften the angles of the face. Rimless or semi-rimless frames are also good options. Avoid narrow frames, which can accentuate the width of your cheekbones.

- To balance the length of an oblong face, look for frames with more depth than width, such as oversized or aviator styles. Decorative or contrasting temple details can add width to your face. Avoid frames that are too narrow, as they can make your face appear longer.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

While face shape is a key factor in choosing the right glasses, it's not the only consideration. Your personal style, skin tone and the purpose of the glasses (e.g., professional, casual, or athletic) can influence your choice. Try on different styles and colors to see what feels best for you. Ultimately, the perfect pair of glasses will enhance your features, reflect your personality, and make you feel confident every time you wear them.

The Best Foods for Healthy Eyes

One of the best ways to maintain good eye health is through a balanced diet rich in nutrients that support vision.

Certain vitamins, minerals and antioxidants play a critical role in preventing eye diseases and promoting overall eye health. Incorporating these nutrients into your daily meals can help you keep your eyes healthy and your vision sharp.

VITAMIN A AND BETA-CAROTENE

Vitamin A maintains good vision, particularly in low-light conditions. It boosts the health of the cornea, the eye's outermost layer. Beta-carotene, a precursor to vitamin A, is found in many colorful fruits and vegetables and helps prevent dry eyes and night blindness.

Foods to include: Carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut squash, and dark leafy greens like spinach and kale are excellent sources of beta-carotene. Liver, which is rich in vitamin A, can also be included in moderation.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3 fatty acids, particularly DHA and EPA, contribute to the health of the retina. They help reduce inflammation and support the eye's oily outer layer, preventing dry eyes.

Foods to include: Fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna and sardines are the best



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sources of omega-3s. For those who prefer plant-based options, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts also provide omega-3s, although in a different form known as ALA.

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C is a powerful

antioxidant that helps protect the eyes from damage caused by free radicals, which can lead to cataracts and AMD. It plays a role in maintaining the health of blood vessels in the eyes, reducing the risk of eye diseases.

Foods to include: Citrus

fruits like oranges, lemons and grapefruits are well-known sources of vitamin C. Other good options include strawberries, bell peppers, broccoli and Brussels sprouts.

VITAMIN E

Vitamin E is another anti-

oxidant that helps protect the eyes from oxidative stress. This nutrient is particularly important in preventing cataracts and slowing the progression of AMD.

Foods to include: Nuts and seeds, such as almonds, sunflower seeds, and hazelnuts, are rich in vitamin E. Spinach and avocados are also good sources.

ZINC

Zinc is a mineral that aids the transportation of vitamin A from the liver to the retina, where it helps produce melanin, a protective pigment in the eyes. Zinc deficiency has been linked to poor night vision and an increased risk of developing AMD.

Foods to include: Oysters are one of the best sources of zinc, but if seafood isn't your preference, beef, pork and chicken provide zinc. Plant-based sources include beans, lentils and pumpkin seeds.

LUTEIN AND ZEAXANTHIN

Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants found in the retina. These nutrients help filter harmful high-energy blue light and protect the eyes from oxidative damage. Consuming foods rich in lutein and zeaxanthin can help reduce the risk of developing chronic eye diseases like AMD and cataracts.

Foods to include: Green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach, and collard greens are rich in lutein and zeaxanthin. Other sources include peas, corn and eggs.

Managing Symptoms Effectively

Seasonal allergies, often triggered by pollen from trees, grasses and weeds, can make life miserable for millions of people each year.

While sneezing, runny noses and congestion are common symptoms, seasonal allergies can also take a toll on your eyes. Itchy, red and watery eyes are a hallmark of allergic conjunctivitis, a condition that can be both irritating and uncomfortable.

HOW ALLERGIES AFFECT YOUR EYES

When allergens such as pollen, dust or pet dander come into contact with your eyes, your body's immune system reacts by releasing histamines. These chemicals cause inflammation, leading to the classic symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis: redness, itching, tearing and swelling.

In addition to redness and itching, you might experience a burning sensation in your eyes, increased tear production or a feeling of grittiness, as if something is in your eye. Allergies can also make your eyes more sensitive to light.

MANAGING SYMPTOMS EFFECTIVELY

Managing eye symptoms caused by seasonal allergies involves a combination of preventive measures and



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treatments. Here's what you can do to keep your eyes comfortable during allergy season:

Avoid triggers: The best way to prevent allergic reactions is to avoid exposure to allergens. Keep windows closed during high pollen seasons, use air conditioning with a clean filter and avoid outdoor activities when pollen counts are high. Wearing sunglasses outdoors can help

protect your eyes from airborne allergens.

Use artificial tears: Over-the-counter artificial tears can help wash allergens out of your eyes and relieve dryness. Using these drops several times a day can provide relief without the risk of side effects associated with medicated eye drops.

Apply cold compresses: Placing a cold, damp cloth

over your closed eyes can help reduce inflammation and soothe itching. Cold compresses are particularly effective when used at the first sign of symptoms.

Try antihistamine eye drops: If you experience more severe symptoms, antihistamine eye drops can block the release of histamines and provide quick relief from itching and redness. Some products

contain decongestants, which help reduce redness by constricting blood vessels. However, it's important not to overuse these drops, as they can cause rebound redness when used for more than a few days.

Take oral antihistamines: Oral antihistamines can help manage overall allergy symptoms, including those affecting your eyes. Non-drowsy options like loratadine (Claritin) or cetirizine (Zyrtec) are effective for many people. However, some antihistamines can cause dryness, which may worsen eye symptoms, so balance the benefits and side effects.

Consult your doctor: If over-the-counter treatments aren't providing enough relief, consult with an eye care professional. Prescription-strength eye drops or other medications may be needed. Your doctor can help determine whether your symptoms are related to allergies or another underlying condition.

LONG-TERM EYE CARE

While managing symptoms is important, long-term eye care during allergy season should focus on prevention. Regularly clean your home to reduce indoor allergens, use high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters and wash your face and hands after spending time outdoors to remove pollen. Taking these steps can help minimize the effect of seasonal allergies on your eyes and keep them healthy throughout the year.

How to Improve Night Vision

Good night vision contributes to safer driving, navigating in low-light conditions and enjoying nighttime activities.

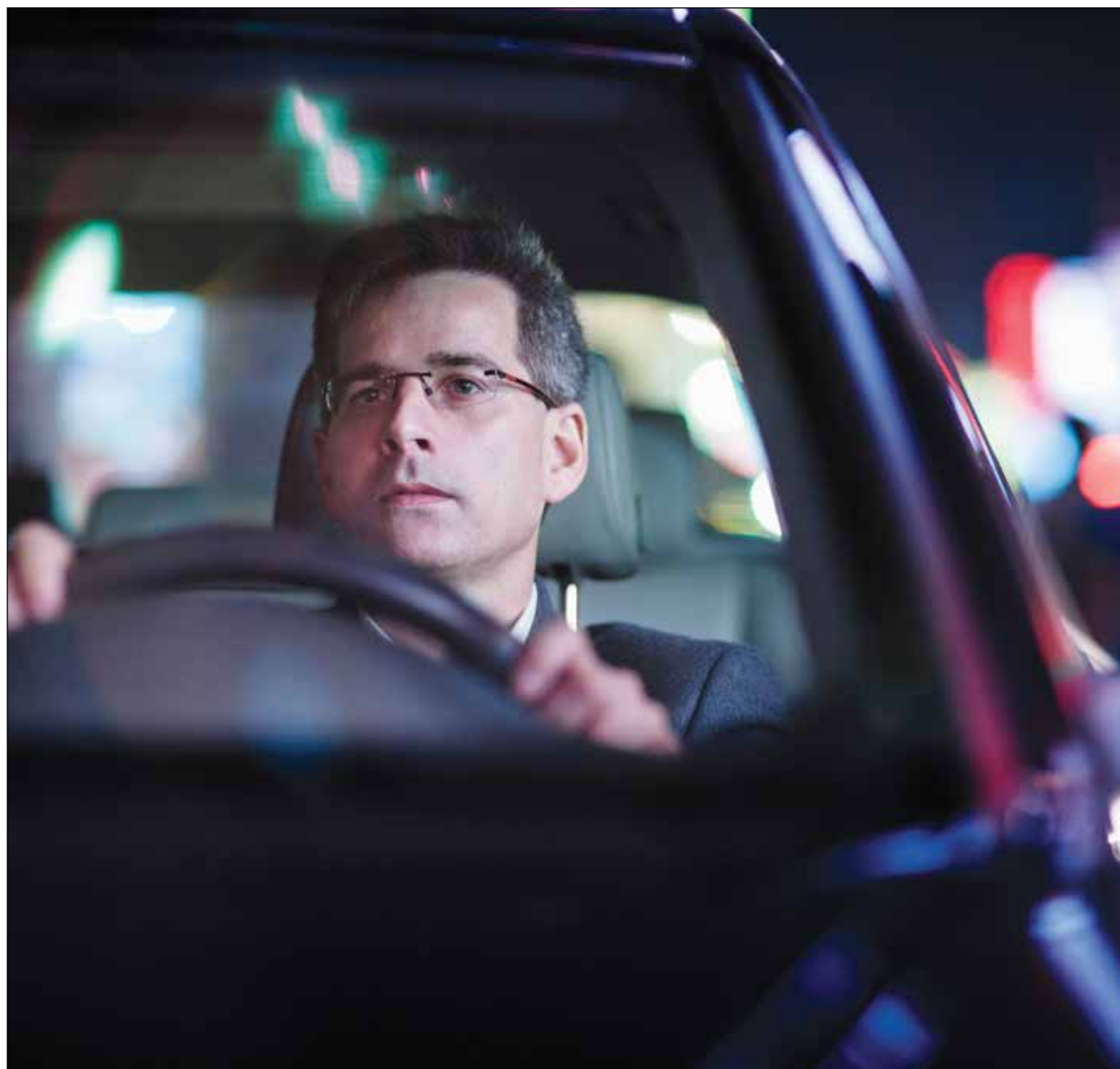
However, as we age or due to certain health conditions, our night vision can deteriorate, making it difficult to see clearly in the dark. Fortunately, there are several ways to improve your night vision and ensure that you're prepared for low-light situations.

EAT FOR EYE HEALTH

A balanced diet rich in essential vitamins and minerals can significantly improve your night vision. Nutrients like vitamin A, found in foods such as carrots, sweet potatoes and dark leafy greens, are crucial for maintaining good vision, particularly in low light. Vitamin A is a key component of rhodopsin, a protein in the eyes that allows you to see in dim light. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and tuna, support retinal health and can improve overall vision. Zinc, present in foods like oysters, beef and pumpkin seeds, helps transport vitamin A from the liver to the retina to produce melanin, a protective pigment in the eyes.

PROTECT YOUR EYES FROM GLARE

Glare from bright lights can make it difficult to see at



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night. Wear anti-reflective (AR) coating glasses, which minimize reflections on the lenses. If you don't wear glasses, consider investing in a pair of night-driving glasses with yellow-tinted lenses designed to reduce glare from oncoming headlights and streetlights. Additionally, make sure your car's windshield is clean, both inside and out, as dirt and smudges can exacerbate glare.

PRACTICE EYE EXERCISES

Simple exercises like focusing on a distant object and then shifting your gaze to something closer can help improve your eyes' flexibility and adaptability. Another exercise involves closing your eyes and slowly rolling them in a circular motion for a minute. These exercises can help reduce eye strain and enhance

your night vision over time.

ADJUST YOUR ENVIRONMENT

When driving at night, dim your dashboard lights to reduce contrast with the dark road. If you're at home, use soft, indirect lighting to help your eyes adjust more easily when moving between well-lit and dark areas. Avoid using bright screens or lights before bed, as

they can make it harder for your eyes to adapt to darkness.

TAKE BREAKS FROM SCREENS

Excessive screen time can cause eye strain, leading to difficulty seeing in low light. The blue light emitted by digital screens can interfere with your night vision by reducing the contrast between objects and their background. To mitigate this, follow the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This practice can help reduce eye strain and maintain your ability to see clearly at night.

CONSIDER EYE SUPPLEMENTS

If your diet doesn't provide all the nutrients needed for optimal eye health, consider taking supplements. Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants that support eye health and can improve your night vision. Vitamin A and zinc supplements are beneficial, particularly if you have a deficiency. However, consult with an eye care professional before starting any new supplement regimen.

SCHEDULE REGULAR EYE EXAMS

During an eye exam, your optometrist can check for conditions like cataracts, glaucoma and retinal issues that can impair night vision. If you have difficulty seeing at night, discuss this with your eye doctor, as it could be a sign of an underlying problem.