



VISION MATTERS



**A sight test is a
vital health check**



Vision matters

Sight is the sense that we fear losing the most – but many of us don't know how to look after our eyes properly, or what to do if there is a problem.

Why regular sight tests are so vital

It's easy for us to neglect our eyes because they don't usually hurt when there is something wrong.

Having a sight test won't only tell you if you need new glasses or a change of prescription, it's also a vital health check. It can pick up many general health problems and early signs of eye conditions before you are aware of

any symptoms – many of which can be treated if found early enough.



Are some people more at risk from eye disease than others?

Anyone can develop sight problems – but it is especially important to look after your eyes if you are:

- over 60 years old
- from certain ethnic groups
- someone with a learning disability
- from a family with a history of eye disease

How often do I need to visit the optician?

Most adults need to see an optician for a sight test **every two years**.

The UK National Screening Committee recommends that all children are offered screening at age four to five years to assess their vision and likely future requirements.



What should I do if I notice a change in my sight?

You should visit your optician or GP if you are concerned with any aspect of your vision at any time.

How do I find my nearest optician?

- In England, go to the NHS Choices website at: www.nhs.uk and select 'Opticians' from the 'Find services' section.
- In Scotland go to www.scotland.gov.uk and type in the search bar 'NHS Boards'.
- In Wales go to www.wales.nhs.uk and click on 'NHS Wales Directory'.
- In Northern Ireland go to www.hscni.net and click on 'Local Services'.
- Look in the Yellow Pages.
- Call NHS Direct: **0845 4647**



What do I do if I am unable to get to an optician?

If you are unable to leave home unaccompanied due to a physical or mental illness or disability you may be able to have a sight test at home (also known as a domiciliary sight test). This service is also available on the NHS for those who are eligible for a free NHS sight test. For more information visit www.nhs.uk



What else can I do to look after my eyes?

- Stop smoking – smokers are more likely to develop age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and cataracts than non-smokers.
- Get moving – regular exercise can help with eye health because it ensures your eyes get a good supply of oxygen.
- Eat healthily and don't drink too much alcohol.
- Protect your eyes from the sun – never look directly into the sun and always wear good quality sunglasses (they should always carry the 'CE' quality mark and the British Standard BS EN 1836:2005).



What symptoms do I need to look out for in my children?



Tell tale signs include sitting close to the TV, holding objects very close to their face, blinking a lot, eye rubbing or one eye turning either in or out. You don't have to be able to read to have a sight test.

Am I eligible for a free NHS funded sight test or help with the cost of glasses?

Some people are entitled to a free NHS funded sight test and an optical voucher. An optical voucher entitles you to help towards the cost of glasses or contact lenses. The cost of a private sight test will vary.



- In England, Northern Ireland and Wales eligibility for NHS sight tests is the same.
- In Scotland everyone is entitled to a free NHS eye examination.
- Entitlements to optical vouchers are the same in all four UK countries.

Further information is available at www.nhs.uk and in the Department of Health HC11 leaflet – *Help with health costs*.

To obtain a copy, call **0845 610 1112** or visit

www.dh.gov.uk/

helpwithhealthcosts



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www.visionmatters.org.uk