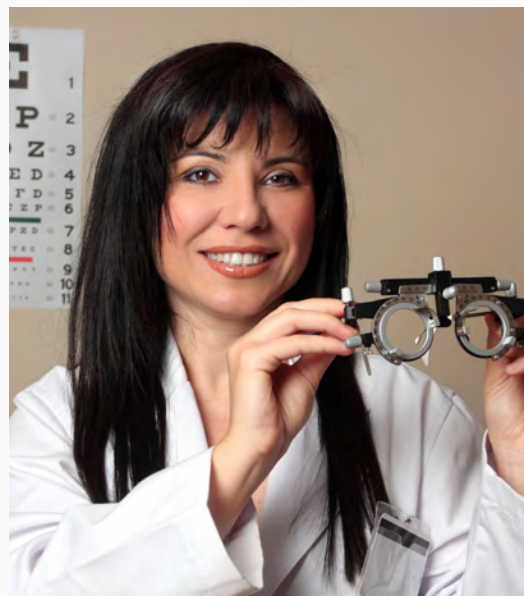


Talking to Your Health Care Provider

Recognizing the risks and symptoms of common eye diseases will help you know when it is necessary to seek care. Individuals who are high-risk for a condition that may begin without symptoms should talk to their eye doctor about how often to come in for routine exams. **If you are currently experiencing eye symptoms, do not wait for them to become severe before seeing your doctor.**

Schedule an appointment with an [optometrist](#) or an [ophthalmologist](#) if you have concerns about a medical condition related to your eyes. Both of these doctors will be able to review the symptoms and assess your risk for eye disease. If you need extensive medical treatment, you might be referred to a specialist for your eye disease for follow-up care.



Preparing for Your Doctor Visit

To help your provider better understand your eye symptoms and experience, give specific examples of activities that your symptoms prohibit you from doing and remedies you have tried to manage your symptoms.

Consider bringing the following to your appointment:

- Your history of symptoms and, if applicable, past diagnoses or misdiagnoses
- Your most recent prescription or current eye glasses and/or contact lenses
- A record of past eye tests, treatments, and surgeries
- A list of your current medications — *You can also take a picture or bring the bottles with you*
- Family history of eye diseases or undiagnosed symptoms
- Names and contact information for other health care professionals who provide you with care
- A support person (such as a spouse, family member, or friend) who can help you take notes and advocate for you, or transport you home if your vision is impaired — *You may want to call the office in advance to determine if you will need someone to drive you home*



A **Doctor's Visit Worksheet** is provided in the Appendix of SWHR's Guide to Women's Eye Health for you to fill out and take with you when you visit your eye doctor.

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider

Compiling a list of questions before your appointment may help you feel more prepared to discuss your eye health and plans for long-term care of your eyes. Questions may vary depending on whether you are going for a routine eye exam or a follow-up appointment to address an eye condition. Some example questions are provided below:

Routine Eye Exam

- What can I expect during this eye examination?
- Can you explain the purpose of the tests you are going to perform today?
- What could be the cause of the symptoms I'm experiencing?
- Do I need additional tests to diagnose an eye condition?
- What other symptoms should I look out for?
- How often should I schedule my routine eye exams?



Ongoing Treatment

- What treatment options are available to me for my eye condition? What are the risks and benefits of each?
- Could any of my current medications make my eye condition worse? (Have a list of medications and doses prepared to share with your provider.)
- What lifestyle or behavioral changes may help me control my symptoms or slow disease progression?
- Is there another health care provider or specialist that I should consult?
- How often should I schedule follow-up visits?
- If my vision cannot be corrected, can you refer me to a specialist in low vision?
- What resources or programs can you recommend to help me afford my care?
- Can you provide a list of community resources that can help me with my condition?



Deciding on a Treatment Plan

Things to consider when deciding your treatment plan:

- Your age
- Lifestyle and activity levels
- Symptom management
- Treatment efficacy and side effects
- Health insurance

When deciding on a treatment plan with your provider(s), your plan may incorporate a combination of approaches and may change over time. You should discuss with your provider(s) which treatments will address the eye disease itself and which will address your symptoms, as well as your personal needs/goals for treatment now and in the future.



Do not hesitate to seek out a second opinion if you want another perspective on your diagnosis and/or treatment options.



It is also important to find out the details of your health insurance coverage for the treatment options you desire to pursue.

Some other key topics to discuss include:

- How long you should wait before you can expect to experience positive results from your treatment
- Side effects of any medications and/or therapies
- Expectations for the frequency and severity of side effects, and how to handle them
- Recommended resources to help you understand your financial options for paying for treatment(s)

Ask your provider to outline what a follow-up plan for monitoring your eye health looks like – recovery time for any procedures, which specialists to consult, and how often to schedule a visit.

It is helpful to keep a record or journal of your treatment activities and how each affects your symptoms and health. Share this information with your health care provider so that you can discuss any modifications to your plan that may be helpful or necessary moving forward.