

Glaucoma is the name given to a group of eye conditions, which affect the optic nerve and lead to the progressive loss of your peripheral vision. If left untreated it can lead to total sight loss.

Patients with glaucoma are often unaware that there are any problems with their vision however a sight test can detect it early.

The condition is usually managed using eye drops.

Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

Britain's leading cause of blindness – usually develops in people aged 50+ and is more common in women than men.

AMD is rarely painful however, sufferers begin to notice shadowy areas in their central vision where retinal cells have been damaged by the disease.

Sufferers may experience blurred, fuzzy or distorted vision. Straight lines may become crooked or wavy and objects can appear an unusual size or shape.

Treatment or management of the condition depends on the type of AMD you have (wet or dry). Your optometrist will advise you on the best options which may include dietary and lifestyle changes.

For more advice about looking after your eyes visit www.visionmatters.org.uk



FOCUS ON WOMEN'S EYE HEALTH



Sight loss in women

As we age the risk of suffering a sight threatening eye condition increases and it's women who are at greatest risk.

In fact, according to the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) nearly two thirds of people living with sight loss are female.

A number of factors including a longer life expectancy, hormonal changes and an increased prevalence of obesity, put women at increased risk of poor eye health.

Regular eye tests are therefore vital to ensure the early detection of common eye conditions.

Presbyopia

Presbyopia is a condition that affects everyone to

some degree as a stiffening of the eye's crystalline lens occurs as part of the natural ageing process.

However, symptoms such as eye fatigue and headaches when doing close work; a need for brighter / more direct light when reading and difficulty seeing clearly close up appear around five years earlier in women (40 years) than men (45 years).

Management includes magnifying reading glasses, prescription eyewear or lens implant surgery, for those who need cataract surgery.

Dry eyes

Dry eye is the most common cause of eye irritation in people aged 65+. Women are most likely to be affected

by the condition, which is often prevalent during the menopause when fluctuations in hormone levels affect ocular tissue and the composition of your tears.

A study conducted by the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR) found 61% of peri-menopausal and menopausal women suffer from evaporative dry eye.

Some research suggests hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may alleviate symptoms of the disease.

If you suffer symptoms of dry eye – grittiness, tearing or a feeling that there is something in your eye – speak to your optometrist or pharmacist who will advise you on treatment options.

These may include dietary changes, eyelid or eyelash hygiene, lubricating eye drops or punctum plugs.

Cataracts

The prevalence of cataracts (clouding of the lens in the eye) is higher in women than in men of the same age.

Symptoms of cataract include blurred vision, ghosting, glare problems, impaired colour perception and poor vision.

In most cases, cataracts can be treated very simply with routine surgery as a day-patient.

Glaucoma

Recent research suggests that early loss of oestrogen, ie early menopause, is associated with an increased risk of glaucoma.