

# September is Healthy Aging Month

9/2/2011

As we age, there are certain changes to our vision which are to be expected and others which may indicate more serious conditions that warrant medical intervention.

Common changes in vision as you age:

- Reduced sensitivity to light (improved task lighting can help).
- Decreased visual acuity (consider reducing night driving).
- Difficulty reading small print (eyeglasses and magnifiers aid focusing).

According to the Mayo Clinic, aging makes you more prone to developing some of these eye diseases which impair your vision:

- **Cataracts:** If your eye's lens becomes cloudy or if the lens develops opaque areas that block light from passing through, you may have a condition called a cataract. Most cataracts can be detected only with special instruments and treated with surgery. About half of Americans age 80 and older have cataracts or have had cataract surgery.
- **Glaucoma:** This is a group of diseases usually associated with elevated fluid pressure inside your eyeball. The pressure can damage your optic nerve and cause blind spots to develop. If untreated, Glaucoma can lead to blindness in both eyes. When detected early, glaucoma is treatable with medication or surgery.
- **Macular degeneration:** Age-related macular degeneration occurs when tissues in the retina which are responsible for the center of your visual field degenerate. As a result, a blind spot develops in the center of your vision. AMD is one of the most frequent causes of vision loss in people over 60. If caught early, treatment might be able to reduce the extent of your vision loss.
- **Floaters:** As you age, your vitreous can become more liquid, causing floaters (clumps of gel, fibers and cells) that appear as spots and specks floating across your visual field. Most floaters are harmless, but if you suddenly develop a large number, especially if accompanied by flashes of light, it might signal a retinal tear, retinal detachment or possible eye melanoma. In such cases, seek medical attention immediately.

**The best prevention for all eye related diseases is to get regular eye exams.**