



MY VISION IS FINE

Why do I need an eye exam?

BY Robert K. Butryn, M.D.

Northern Vision Eye Care delivers state of the art medical, surgical and optical eye care with a passion for excellence, individuality and community service.



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Your sight is truly a miraculous gift. Did you know your eyes can see into the past? The Andromeda galaxy is 2.8 million light years from earth and can be seen as a fuzzy speck of light below the constellation Cassiopeia. The light you see traveled 2.8 million years to reach your eye; therefore what you are seeing is actually 2.8 million years into the past! Can you see the Andromeda Galaxy?

Your eyes are your windows to the world. You go to your annual physical to screen for health problems without warnings like cardiovascular disease or cancer. Your eyes also need routine exams to screen for eye diseases without warnings such as glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. With people living longer today, preserving your eyesight will enhance your quality of life as you age.

Did you know that approximately 19 million adult Americans have diabetes, and diabetic retinopathy is the leading cause of blindness among working age Americans? Diabetic retinopathy can be the first sign of diabetes. Diabetes affects the small blood vessels throughout the entire body, including the eye, and these changes can be identified with a non-invasive eye exam. Several decades of clinical research and the advent of medical lasers and multi-center clinical trials have paved the way for treatment strategies that are 90% effective in preventing severe vision loss. Diabetic eye disease is best treated before you lose vision. With access to the latest technology, such as the Optopmap retinal scanner, fluorescing angiography, OCT laser scanner, digital

photography, and argon lasers, we can optimize our detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy.

Unlike diabetes, glaucoma only affects the eye and has no early symptoms. Nevertheless, glaucoma is the leading cause of legal blindness in the United States. The vision loss is painless and difficult to notice in the early stages. Over 7 million office visits occur annually to monitor patients who are at risk for or who have glaucoma. It is often referred to as the sneak thief of sight, because nearly half of those affected are unaware of their disease. In the past, glaucoma was synonymous with high pressure within the eye. We now have a much better understanding of the complexity of glaucoma and its risk factors. For example, glaucoma can occur with normal eye pressures and high pressures do not always mean glaucoma. Since there is no single test to detect glaucoma, we are diligent in screening and monitoring our patients who are at risk for developing vision loss. Combining eye exams with advanced technology such as retinal scanning lasers, corneal thickness measurements, and blue-yellow visual field analysis allows diagnosis of glaucoma in its earliest stages. This is important, because early diagnosis and treatment preserves sight.

We often take for granted just how precious our eyes are. Unfortunately many people equate their eye health to simply needing glasses or seeing clearly and often do not realize that there are silent eye conditions which can result in vision loss if left untreated.