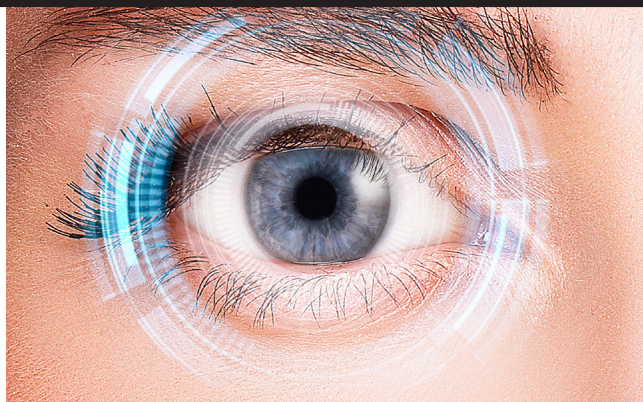


# The eyes have it

## How to protect them for a lifetime

Our 40s and 50s seem to be that magical age when we need to start having regular checkups and screenings for a host of potential medical conditions. Vision is no exception. Regular eye exams not only monitor changes in your vision for prescription updates, but they can also catch more serious issues in the early stages of development.



“Many of the things that cause problems don’t show any symptoms until it’s too late,” said Dr. David Montesani, co-owner of Eye Care & Vision Associates. “Comprehensive eye exams allow us to find these things early and treat them before complications arise.”

Here are the three conditions Dr. Montesani encounters regularly, along with the technological developments that have led to new advances in eye surgery.

### Cataracts

Usually the result of the normal aging process, cataracts form when the center of the eye’s lens naturally becomes thicker and more cloudy. However, they may also develop at an earlier age as the result of medical issues such as diabetes, eye injuries, medications including steroids, and unprotected exposure to the sunlight. Symptoms may include blurred or dim vision, difficulty driving at night,



sensitivity to light, fading of colors and frequent eyeglass prescription changes.

“Twenty-five years ago, surgery involved a large incision for manual removal,” said Dr. Montesani. “Today, surgery is done by ultrasound with a two-millimeter wound, resulting in much shorter healing time and less chance of infection. And the surgery takes just five or six minutes compared to up to an hour.”

### Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

The center part of the eye’s film, the macula is responsible for reading and seeing fine detail, like threading a needle. More prevalent with age, as well as among smokers and people with light skin pigmentation, the cells that live beneath the macular die out. Symptoms include central vision loss, a distortion in lines or edges, and blurring of words when reading.

“There are two types of AMD: wet and dry,” explained Dr. Montesani. “With wet AMD, new blood vessels form resulting in the swelling of the retina and leaking of blood, which causes vision loss. While there is no cure, we can now

*“Today, surgery is done by ultrasound... resulting in much shorter healing time and less chance of infection.”*

— Dr. David Montesani  
Co-owner, Eye Care  
& Vision Associates

treat wet AMD with injectables that shut down new blood vessel growth and prevent further damage.”

### Glaucoma

In this eye disease, the optic nerve is damaged when the pressure inside the eye rises because fluid cannot get out through its exit channels. If the pressure rises high enough, vision deficits and permanent damage to the optic nerve can occur.

“The goal is obviously to lower the eye pressure,” said Dr. Montesani. “In the past, we were stuck with either eye drops or very invasive surgeries, depending on the severity. In the past 10 years, minimally invasive glaucoma surgeries have been developed to reduce the risks, complications and trauma.”

Regular eye examinations are the best way to detect these eye diseases and more. While age, family history and past eye injuries increase risk, Dr. Montesani recommends everyone be screened regularly regardless. ■

Visit [ecvaeyecare.com](http://ecvaeyecare.com) to request an appointment at one of the four Eye Care & Vision Associates locations: Elmwood Village, Orchard Park, Niagara Falls and Williamsville.