



Making *Life Easier*®

Vision Care and Correction

Ever ask yourself if the print on magazines and newspapers is getting smaller and harder to read? Why is it you can't seem to hold papers far enough away so the print is in focus? And did your favorite restaurants suddenly turn the lights lower because you're having a difficult time reading menus?

If you can relate to any of the above examples, you are not alone. Just as people in their late 40s and 50s commonly encounter thinning and graying hair, vision changes and challenges become increasingly noticeable. Likewise, the risk of eye disease increases with age, particularly for people age 65 and older. While glasses and contacts may be a solution for some conditions, diminished and uncorrected vision can make it difficult for people to perform routine activities and live independently.

Despite being a nuisance and even an embarrassment for some, reading glasses are a fact of life for many people. With age, more and more people rely on glasses, bifocals or trifocals to help maintain their eyesight as changes to vision make it more difficult to go about their daily activities. Just as the need for reading glasses should be an expected part of aging, taking steps to protect your vision become increasingly important.

Common vision changes include:

- Adjusting your eyes to sudden changes in lighting may take longer (e.g., inside to outside, from a brightly lit hallway into a dark theatre).
- It may take longer for eyes to adjust and focus when quickly switching from looking at things that are close (e.g., dashboard gauges on your car) and things that are farther away (e.g., road signs).
- Glare makes it increasingly challenging to see (e.g., text on glossy paper, headlights from on-coming cars).
- Detail and contrast is less pronounced due to a gradual thickening and yellowing of the lens of the eye (e.g., lines are not as sharp, harder to distinguish between similar colors).
- The risk of eye disease increases (e.g., cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and macular degeneration).

Terms and Explanations

- **Cataracts** are a gradual clouding of the lens of the eye, making images less clear and sharp.
- **Diabetic retinopathy** is caused by a lack of circulation to the retina where the arteries in the retina become weakened and leak, forming small spots that cloud a person's vision.
- **Glaucoma** is a buildup of fluid in the eye that causes pressure inside the eye and can destroy the optic nerve and lead to blindness.
- **Macular degeneration** has to do with the deterioration of a portion of the retina responsible for focusing central vision in the eye making it difficult to read and recognize detail. This is the leading cause of functional blindness for older people.
- **Optometrist** is a health care professional who performs eye examinations, can detect and diagnosis eye diseases, and can prescribe correct lenses (e.g., glasses, contacts).
- **Ophthalmologist** is a medical doctor specializing in the eyes, diseases affecting the eyes (e.g., cataracts, diabetes), and eye surgery.

“Though changes to vision are common, they can certainly be quite frustrating,” said Mary Doepke, RN, Owner of Home Helpers of Hinsdale. “The good news is there are many options to help people address and adjust to vision changes.”

August marks Cataract Awareness Month, and Home Helpers is doing its part to increase public awareness of vision care and the importance of vision screenings.

To maintain and maximize your vision, annual vision screenings are increasingly important as people reach middle-age. Often problems can be identified early so corrective action can be taken. There have been considerable advances in vision care and correction over the past decade. In addition to glasses and contacts, there are a number of surgical options.

For example, Lasik surgery is now a common procedure to correct for farsightedness and nearsightedness, and surgery to remove cataracts is a relatively short and simple procedure. To the right is an example of how a person with normal vision (top) and cataracts (bottom) might see the Home Helpers logo.



Adjusting to Aging Eyes

- Give your eyes time to adjust to noticeable changes in lighting. For example, when you walk into a dark room (e.g., theatre), stop for a minute or two until you are able to see more clearly. Doing so may help you avoid tripping, falling or bumping into something or someone else.
- Keep reading glasses handy and consider purchasing a magnifying glass/lens to help ensure you can accurately read labels and instructions (e.g., medicine containers).
- Keep a small flashlight in your pocket, purse or on your key ring to help you see and read when lighting is dim.
- Avoid driving at night, especially in rainy conditions, when the glare from headlights and wet roads can be a problem.
- When using a computer, and there is not a button to adjust text size, try the following to increase the font size: press the Control and + keys. (On a Mac, press Command and +.)

Diminished vision can adversely impact a person’s ability to live and function independently. If vision changes cannot be corrected or they interfere with a person’s quality of life, you may want to consider getting assistance with activities of daily living – it could mean the difference between maintaining your independence at home versus moving to a nursing home.

At [Home Helpers](#), many of our clients are limited in their abilities due to vision changes. Whether providing transportation to and from appointments and errands, or simply reading the newspaper aloud, we offer the support and encouragement people need and deserve. We can also help with various tasks around the house, including light housekeeping, meal preparation and laundry. At Home Helpers, we recognize it is important to help people maintain their dignity in a respectful manner.

To learn more about age-related vision changes, we suggest the following organizations/websites:

- American Optometric Association: www.aoa.org

- National Institute of Health | Senior Health, *Aging And Your Eyes*: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/aging-and-your-eyes>
 - Mayo Clinic, *Vision problems as you age*: www.mayoclinic.com/health/vision-problems/HA00061
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HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*. Home Helpers offers comprehensive home care, personal care* and companionship services similar to the care and support often provided by family members. Our flexible care plans are tailored to fit our clients' specific needs and budgets. Compassionate Care is a bi-monthly newsletter produced by Home Helpers. We hope you found this edition to be informative and helpful.

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*Personal care provided as permitted by state law. Each office is independently owned and operated. *Services may vary at each individual office location. Check with your local Home Helpers office for available services.* Home Helpers does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of religion, race, sex, color, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age or sexual preference in connection with employment or acceptance, treatment, or participation in its programs, services and activities.