

# Day 4: It Just Keeps Changing: Vision

## Vision:

- Vision is one of our primary senses, relied upon the most to navigate throughout our lives.  
What if our vision is compromised? If we cannot see where we are going, or what is in our way, then we can trip and possibly fall
- As we age, the lenses that are inside our eyes thicken which makes it difficult to focus on an object. This is a part of aging and tends to start after 40.
- Our peripheral vision, what we see “out of the corner of our eyes” declines with age as well. Our ability to see colours and contrast also declines.
- Cataracts are common with aging. Cataracts happen when the lens in our eyes becomes cloudy and restricts the amount of light that our eye receives, making it difficult to see.
- Diabetic Retinopathy: occurs after chronic exposure to high blood sugar. Diabetes may cause new blood vessel growth over the retina which can break and cause scar tissue and cause retinal detachment, which can lead to blindness if untreated.
- Glaucoma is a category of eye disorders often associated with a buildup of internal eye pressure, which can damage the eye's optic nerve. Early diagnosis is the best way to prevent vision loss.
- Macular degeneration results in a loss of vision in the center of the visual field because of damage to the retina. This makes it difficult to read/recognize faces
- Please note that there are other age-related eye diseases that can worsen your vision and put you at risk of a fall

## What you can do about changes in your vision:

- Visit an optometrist (yearly) to identify and correct any concerns with your vision. (A portion of your visit & exam is covered by OHIP).
- Clean your glasses regularly!!
- Ensure that your glasses fit properly
- Manage your treatment options



# Day 4: It Just Keeps Changing: Hearing

## Hearing:

- Naturally, our hearing declines as we age. Hearing loss frequently goes unnoticed as it happens gradually.
- The impact can be huge. With unmanaged hearing loss, individuals may become withdrawn and socially isolated which can lead to the breakdown of support networks and the risk of depression. 1 out of 4 adult Canadians reports having some hearing loss.
- Research shows that people with mild hearing loss are 3x more likely to fall. Hearing loss can make us unaware of our environment, which can lead to a fall.
- Another reason hearing loss may increase the risk of falls is due to “cognitive load”. Individuals with hearing loss are using more brain energy to help compensate for the sounds they miss and may not be able to give enough energy to help with balance and gait and may be more likely to experience a fall.”
  - It’s almost like the eyes are working overtime in an attempt to compensate for the hearing loss. When our vision is overloaded, we are at risk of a fall

***The good news is there are many devices available to assist with hearing loss!***

## What you can do about changes in your hearing:

- Talk to your doctor about your hearing, have your hearing tested once a year, and get hearing aids or implants if needed.
- Wear your hearing aids (if you have them)!!
- Check the battery on your hearing aids regularly. 90% of people with hearing loss can improve communication with a properly fitted hearing aid, counselling or environmental changes.
- Take a friend when you go out in the community so you are not overwhelmed or confused
- Slow down and take your time
- Be aware of your environment

