

The sight test explained

Every sight test is tailor-made depending on your needs and the methods your optometrist prefers to use. (See the note below.) As well as an eye health check, a sight test might detect signs of underlying general health conditions, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Everyone should have a sight test every two years, or more often if your optometrist recommends it.

The following are some important checks which form part of a normal sight test.

History and symptoms

Your optometrist will ask detailed questions about your eyesight, lifestyle, health and any previous eye problems you or family members may have had. You should bring a list of any medication you take, along with your glasses if you use them, or a previous glasses prescription.

Eyesight test

Your optometrist will check what you can see – close up and in the distance – usually using special charts of symbols or letters. This may be with or without your glasses. They will then work out whether you need glasses or a change of prescription with a series of tests using different lenses. This will also involve simple questions and you should try to answer these as accurately and honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers, so don't worry. For those who are unable to answer these questions, there are other ways of working out a glasses prescription. This is particularly useful for young children or those with learning difficulties or special educational needs.

Your optometrist will also carry out tests on your eye muscles to check how your eyes are working together.

Eye health check

Your optometrist will examine the inside and outside of your eyes. They will tell you if there are any signs of disease or injury. The equipment used for this will vary from practice to practice. Occasionally your optometrist will need to put drops in your eyes to get a better view of the back of your eye but they will explain this before doing so.

Further checks

Sometimes it may be necessary to check your peripheral (or side) vision using a special instrument. This tests for certain conditions of the eyes or the visual parts of your brain.

You may also need an eye-pressure test, which is one of the procedures used to detect glaucoma.

About the AOP

The Association of Optometrists (AOP) is the voice of the optical profession, representing over 80% of practising optometrists. The AOP elevates the work of its members, safeguards their interests, and champions eye health across the UK. For more information, visit www.aop.org.uk

Advice

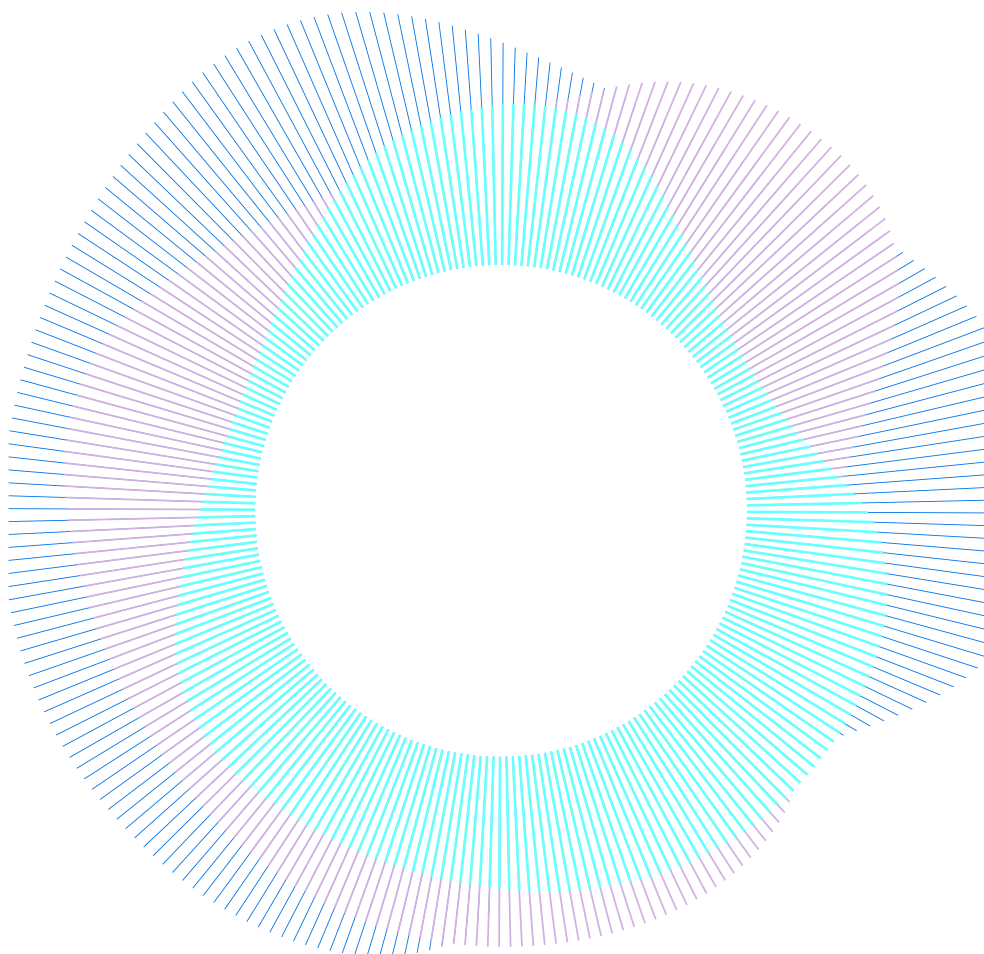
There will be time to talk through the results of your sight test and ask questions. Your optometrist will advise you if you need glasses and make recommendations about the type. They will also tell you if they find any problems with your eyes. If there is something which needs further medical checks, the optometrist will write to your doctor or the eye hospital for you. They will give you a written statement of your results which includes your glasses prescription if you need one. They will also tell you how often you should go for a sight test. The optometrist is also someone who can tell you about how to keep your eyes healthy.

So don't forget the importance of a sight test for you and your family. Your optometrist can do the following.

- Pick up any signs of eye disease – this is usually easier to deal with if found early.
- Check your sight and make it clearer or more comfortable to see.
- Check for signs of underlying general health conditions that sometimes show in the eyes.
- Answer questions and give advice about your eye health and vision.
- Keep you informed about new products or services that can help you.

Note

If you're in Scotland, a sight test is called an eye examination and will include extra services on top of those carried out elsewhere in the UK.



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