



**PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA**

Central Michigan District Health Department  
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

For more information, please call: (989) 773-5921 ext. 8409  
2012 E. Preston Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org)

**To: Senior Newsletter**

**From: Shelli Wolfe, Health Educator**

**RE: Press Release**

**Release Date: February 2011**

**Recognizing Symptoms of Diminished Hearing and Vision**

It is common for people to experience gradual hearing loss and problems with vision as they age.

Annual hearing and vision tests are recommended for all adults over 65 years of age.

Hearing Loss

According to the National Institutes of Health, an estimated one-third of Americans have some degree of hearing loss and of those, close to one-half are older than 75. Doctors believe that heredity and chronic exposure to loud noises are the main factors that contribute to hearing loss over time.

Other factors, such as earwax blockage, can prevent your ears from conducting sounds as well as they should. You can't reverse hearing loss. You and your doctor or hearing specialist can take steps to improve what you hear.

Early signs and symptoms of hearing loss may include:

- Muffled quality of what others are speaking and of various sounds
- Difficulty understanding words, especially against background noise or in a crowd of people
- Frequently asking others to speak more slowly, clearly and loudly
- Needing to turn up the volume of the television or radio
- Withdrawal from conversations and avoidance of some social settings.

Some common treatments for hearing loss are: removing wax blockage, hearing aids, and cochlear implants. People who seek out and receive treatment report greater self-confidence, closer relationships with loved ones, and improved outlook on life, overall.

For people who are experiencing hearing loss, there are tips to help you communicate more easily despite your hearing loss such as: You can position yourself to hear face-to-face, make an effort to

turn off background noise, ask others to speak clearly, and choose quiet settings when going out with friends. You can also consider using an assistive listening device such as: TV-listening systems or telephone-amplifying devices which can help you hear better while decreasing other noises around you.

### Protect Your Eyesight

Having your eyes checked regularly by either an ophthalmologist or optometrist is recommended. During this exam, the eye care professional should dilate your pupils so that he or she can look at your inner eye. This is the way to see common eye diseases that have no early signs or symptoms. Regular check-ups with your doctor are recommended also since some chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure can cause eye problems.

Between visits to the eye doctor, you should see the doctor if you suddenly cannot see or everything looks dim, you see flashes of light, you have eye pain, you experience double vision, or you have redness or swelling of your eye or eyelid. The following common eye problems can be easily treated. But, sometimes they can be signs of more serious issues.

- Slow loss of ability to see close objects or small print. Reading glasses usually fix the problem.
- Floaters are tiny specks or “cobwebs” that seem to float across your vision. Floaters can be a normal part of aging. If you see many new floaters and/or flashes of light, see your eye care professional right away. This is a medical emergency.
- Tearing (or having too many tears) can come from your eyes being sensitive to light, wind, or temperature changes or having dry eyes. Wearing sunglasses may help, or using eye drops. Sometimes tearing is a sign of a more serious eye problem, like an infection or a blocked tear duct.

For some people problems with their vision is even more serious. Some common eye diseases and disorders are:

- Cataracts are cloudy areas in the eye’s lens causing blurred or hazy vision. Some cataracts stay small and others become large and reduce vision.
- Corneal diseases and conditions can cause redness, watery eyes, pain, problems with vision, or a halo effect. Infection and injury are some of the things that can hurt the cornea.
- Dry eye happens when tear glands are not functioning properly and you may feel itching, burning, or have some vision loss. Your eye care professional may tell you to use a home humidifier, special eye drops (artificial tears), or ointments to treat dry eye.

- Glaucoma comes from too much fluid pressure inside the eye. If not treated, it can lead to vision loss and blindness. Glaucoma can be treated.
- Retinal disorders are a leading cause of blindness in the United States.
- Age-related macular degeneration. AMD can harm the sharp vision needed to see objects clearly and to do things like driving and reading. There are many treatments for AMD.
- Diabetic retinopathy. This problem may occur if you have diabetes. It develops slowly and with no early warning signs.
- Retinal detachment. **THIS IS A MEDICAL EMERGENCY.** When the retina separates from the back of the eye, it's called retinal detachment. If you see new floaters or light flashes, go to your eye care professional right away. With surgery or laser treatment, doctors often can prevent loss of vision.

Diminished hearing and vision are expected with aging. Regular visits to hearing and vision doctors can help people identify problems early so that treatments can be found. Visit

[www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/hearing.htm](http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/hearing.htm) for more information about hearing problems or visit [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003029.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003029.htm) for more information about vision problems.

###