



Our Aging Eyes and Vision

BY DR. THOMAS P. FINLEY, *Optometrist*

From the minute we are born, our eyes begin changing. Many people make it through their first 4 decades of life without any problems seeing. Then something dramatic happens in their 40s. They wake up one morning and can't read the newspaper because their arms are too short.

Presbyopia is a condition caused by the eyes decreasing ability to focus on objects close to us. Tasks like reading small print or your cell phone text messages become increasingly difficult. It affects everyone; some people as soon as they turn 40. Some people make it to their late 40s. Presbyopia doesn't discriminate. Everyone gets it sooner or later. There is no cure, and treatment options vary: reading glasses, bifocal or multifocal glasses, taking your nearsighted glasses off to read, contact lenses, and now surgery. All have pros and cons, so it is important to discuss all treatment options with your eye doctor.

Other normal changes occur in our eyes as we age. Our eyes take slightly longer adapting from dark to light conditions and vice versa. Colors may begin to appear faded or dull. Contrast between objects also decreases. These changes make it more difficult driving at night.

Many people also begin noticing black or semi-transparent spots or strands in their vision. These are referred to as vitreal floaters and are normal changes within the clear gel inside the eye. They are actually shadows of normal debris. They are always there but only noticed while looking at a bright or light colored background like reading a book or driving down the road looking at the sky on a sunny day.

Dry Eye refers to eyes that do not produce enough tears or do not produce a good quality

tear to properly wet and nourish the eyes. The eyes become drier more quickly as we age. Our eyes are typically driest when we wake up in the morning. Symptoms vary but include:

- a sandy, scratchy, and irritated feeling,
- burning and redness,
- a feeling that something is in the eye,
- excessive watering and tearing,
- blurred or fluctuating vision.

The above conditions are all normal changes that affect our eyes as we become older. Unfortunately, other sight threatening abnormal changes also increase significantly as we reach our fifties, sixties and above. They are cataracts, glaucoma, and macular degeneration.

Cataracts are a clouding of the clear crystalline lens inside the eye that prevents light from focusing properly on the retina. Everything becomes more difficult to see. When your vision becomes so impaired that you cannot perform your normal daily activities, surgery to remove the cataract is performed. Significant advances in this procedure have occurred.

Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness and increases significantly as we age. It is caused by too much fluid coming into the eye and not enough exiting the eye. The increased fluid builds pressure inside of the eye that eventually causes tissue death and loss of vision. There are usually no symptoms. When detected, glaucoma is usually managed and controlled by using medicated eye drops. There is no cure, so it must be carefully managed.

Macular degeneration is a loss of vision to the macula, the part of the eye that sees fine detail



and colors. It is extremely debilitating since it decreases your ability to read and see objects in the central portion of your vision. New treatments for macular degeneration are available. Early detection, monitoring and treatment is essential.

Lots of changes affect our eyes as we age. Make certain you receive a yearly comprehensive eye examination to guard against these changes and preserve your eyesight. It's also important to see your best to help prevent falls as we become older. Take care of your eyes and vision.



the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Thomas P. Finley received his Bachelor of Science degree from St. Francis University in Pennsylvania, and his Doctorate of Optometry from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. Following graduation, he served as an optometry officer in the United States Air Force and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and the Commendation Medal.

Dr. Finley has served as an adjunct clinical professor for three optometry schools, and has been a clinical investigator for two major contact lens companies. He has published several articles in professional and trade journals and local newspapers and has also lectured at educational conferences.

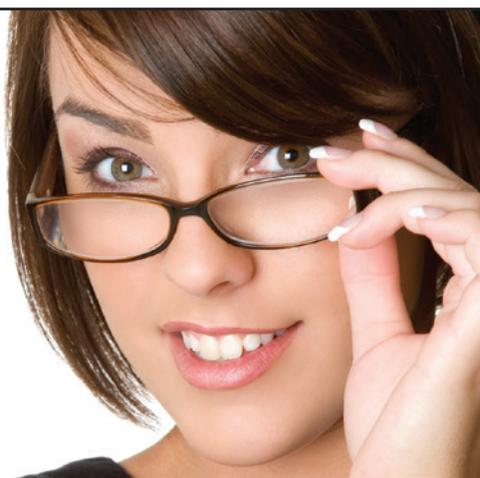
Dr. Finley is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry, a Fellow of the Virginia Academy of Optometry, and a member of the American Optometric Association, Virginia Optometric Association, and Northern Virginia Optometric Society. He is an Advisory Board member for TLC Laser Eye Centers.

Locally, Dr. Finley serves as an active member of the Herndon Rotary Club (past president), Chamber of Commerce (past board member), Optimist Club (youth sports' coach), and Knights of Columbus (past board member). He serves on the board of the Jeanie Schmidt Free Clinic. He was awarded Herndon's "Distinguished Service Award," the Chamber of Commerce's "Small Business of the Year Award," and The Times Newspapers "Best Eye Doctor Award." He has owned his Herndon optometry practice since 1989.

Dr. Finley was recently recognized by the Virginia Optometric Association as Distinguished Optometrist of the Year.

VISION SOURCE™

North America's Premier
Network of Private
Practice Optometrists



**Dr. Finley's Family
Eyecare Optometrists**

709 Pine Street
Herndon, VA 20170
703-471-7810
www.drfinley.net



FREE Optomap Retinal Imaging

with our new **Optos Daytona Retinal Imaging System. A \$39 value.** Must have comprehensive examination. Bring coupon. **Expires 4/30/14.**

 **optomap**
ultra-wide digital retinal imaging