

Heed the Warning; What Eye-Related Symptoms Can Tell US



It seems that when we think of eye-related symptoms, such as blurred vision, we assume that the problem has something to do with our eyes and our vision. And that is often the case. However, there are times when a person experiences an eye-related symptom, and it's actually a sign of a problem not related to the eyes at all.

Jeffrey S. Pelson, OD, FAAO, a VSP doctor in Grants Pass, OR, states that, "Regular eye exams are critical because what may seem like a vision-related problem might not be, and could be a sign of something else. An optometrist is sometimes the first person to notice a medical issue, and will then refer the patient to his or her physician for follow up."

There are several eye-related symptoms that can be a sign of another condition or disease, and here are a few to be aware of:

- **Bulging eyes** - Graves disease, hyperthyroidism
- **Chronic eyelid droop in both eyes, or double vision** - myasthenia gravis (autoimmune disease where nerves are unable to communicate with the muscles)
- **Haze, blurred vision, dimness of vision** - stroke (risk of stroke), multiple sclerosis
- **Headache at the temples or pain with chewing** - Giant cell arteritis (an inflammatory condition that affects the large arteries in the body)
- **Inability to close one eye** - Bell's Palsy (paralysis of a facial nerve, resulting in the inability to control facial muscles on the affected side)
- **Sudden eyelid drop** - possible brain aneurysm
- **Yellow eyes** - liver disease, gallstones, or pancreatic cancer

These eye-related symptoms are **always** an emergency:

- Pupils that are suddenly of unequal size
- Rapid vision changes such as:
 - blurred vision,
 - swarms of floaters,
 - flashing lights.
- Severe pain within the eyeball that is not due to trauma
- Sudden drooping of one or both eyelids

Keep in mind that even if you think you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you may not have the associated illness. Still, you should see a doctor and get yourself checked out.

So heed the warning if you encounter any of these eye-related symptoms, and heed Dr. Pelson's advice: "A routine eye exam can detect simple blurred vision or find a wide range of systemic disease entities that may go otherwise undetected until it's too late." Schedule that all important routine eye exam appointment now.