GEORGIA OPTOMETRIC ASSOCIATION

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ASK YOUR OPTOMETRIST

By

(LOCAL OPTOMETRIST NAME HERE)

Q: When someone says that you have 20/200 vision, is that very bad or very good? In other words, is it what you see at 20 feet, they see at 200 feet or vice versa?

A: This is a common question. 20/200 vision although significantly less than the standard—20/20—is not terrible. It is moderate. 20/200 vision is certainly reduced enough that it should be corrected with glasses or contacts. This may also depend on the patient's visual needs, but most people would feel that this is blurry (poor) vision if uncorrected. The 20/200 visual measurement means that at 20 feet away you see a size 200 letter. The first number is the distance away that the vision is checked and the second number is the size of the letter that you can read. The larger the number the larger the letter size. If you are 20/200, it means that what you see at 20 ft. is what a person 20/20 can see at 200 ft.

Q: What causes spots and "fireworks" in an eye?

A: The spots and floaters, as we generally refer to them, may be associated with migraines. But they are usually caused by a shrinkage of the jelly that fills the back two-thirds of the eye. As this jelly (vitreous) shrinks two things occur. As light goes through the shrunken jelly, a shadow is formed on the back of the eye. This is what is commonly perceived as a floater. Secondly, as the jelly shrinks, it can pull or tug on the retina causing flashing lights. A thorough evaluation by your family optometrist including a dilated examination is suggested. This examination rules out any serious conditions that also can cause spots and floaters.

Q: What causes crossed-eyes?

A: Coordination of your eyes and their ability to work together as a team develops in early childhood. Failure of your eyes (or more precisely, your eye muscles) to coordinate together properly can lead to crossed-eyes. Excessive eye focusing effort in children who are farsighted can also result in crossed-eyes. Crossed-eyes also have a tendency to be hereditary.

Q: What is color blindness?

A: The term "color blind" is often used, but usually incorrectly. Only a very small number of people are completely unable to identify any colors. Color deficiency occurs when your ability to distinguish certain colors and shades is less than normal. There are two major types. Red-green deficiency is by far the most common and results in the inability to distinguish certain shades of red and green. Blue-yellow deficiency is less common and affects the perception of blue and yellow colors. In very rare cases, color deficiency exists to an extent that no colors can be detected. This person sees all things in shades of black, white and gray.

Q: What are some advantages and disadvantages of contact lenses?

A: Advantages

* Offer good peripheral (side) vision
* Reduce visual distortion that may occur with some eyeglasses
* Fit an active lifestyle
* Improve one's appearance

Disadvantages

* They require more daily care than eyeglasses
* Some types require a short adaptation period
* You need to return to your optometrist more often for follow-up to maintain good eye health