If you suffered from poor vision 20,000 years ago, you probably wouldn’t suffer long. Chances are, you would fall prey to something with sharper vision than you have.

We are lucky today in that we can correct vision deficiencies simply and relatively inexpensively, so poor vision doesn’t have to be life-threatening!

If you cannot read the line above clearly from 20 feet, you’re not alone. According to the Vision Council of America, 75% of Americans have some type of vision correction.

If you struggled to read the eye chart, you probably need to have your vision checked.

Source: American Heart Association. Also known as the Heart Fund.
Healthy eyes and vision are a critical part of your child’s development. Children should have their eyes examined regularly, as doctors can detect and provide early treatment for many vision problems and eye diseases.

**Vision care for kids should include:**

- A pediatrician or family physician should check newborns for general eye health in the hospital nursery. An eye doctor should examine high-risk newborns (including premature infants), those with a family history of eye problems, and those with obvious eye irregularities.
- Routine eye-health screenings during the first year of life during checkups with their doctors.
- Eye health screenings and visual acuity tests (or tests that measure sharpness of vision) around age 3 1/2, with their doctors.
- Vision and eye alignment evaluated around age 5 by their doctors. Those who fail either test should be examined by an eye doctor.
- Routine screenings after age 5 at school or the doctor’s office, or after the appearance of symptoms such as squinting or frequent headaches. (A teacher may realize the child isn’t seeing well in class.)
- Annual checkups for kids who wear prescription glasses or contacts to screen for vision changes.

*Source: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)*
Our eyes are more than windows to our soul...

Having a regular vision exam is important for many reasons. In addition to discovering and correcting vision disorders so you can see clearly, an eye exam will screen for cataracts and other blinding eye diseases like glaucoma.

There are also many non-visual health conditions that doctors can detect in a dilated eye exam, including diabetes and hypertension.

And since one in three people with diabetes don’t even know they have it and each year as many as 24,000 people lose their sight because of diabetes, you can “see” the value of a vision exam. In fact, 90% of diabetes-related blindness could be prevented with a regular eye exam.
The Importance of Eye Health

While there are many things that can go wrong with our eyes, three affect over one in 10 Americans.

They are:

- Cataract – when the lens inside your eye clouds up
- Macular degeneration – a hardening of the arteries inside your retina
- Glaucoma – fluid inside your eye doesn’t drain, causing nerve damage

By age 40, you should have yearly eye exams, including pupil dilation.

Healthy Eating for Healthy Eyes

Studies have shown that certain foods may help you keep your eyes healthy. In addition to carrots (yes, the rumor is true!), make sure you are getting enough of these:

- Green, leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, and collards
- Salmon, tuna, and other oily fish
- Eggs, nuts, beans, and other non-meat protein sources
- Oranges and other citrus fruits or juices

Sources: webmd.com/eye-health/good-eyesight; nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes/eyehealthtips.asp