

## Eye Exams Can Reveal Early Signs of Heart and Blood Pressure Problems

*During American Heart Month, optometrists highlight the eye as a window into cardiovascular health.*

**MADISON, Wis.** – Warning signs of heart and blood pressure problems may appear in the eyes before patients notice other symptoms, according to the Wisconsin Optometric Association. During American Heart Month, doctors are encouraging patients to view comprehensive eye exams as part of their overall health strategy.

Because the eye is the only place where blood vessels can be viewed directly without surgery, optometrists can sometimes detect early changes linked to hypertension, diabetes, and other vascular conditions that increase the risk of stroke and heart attack.

“The eye gives us a unique view of a patient’s blood vessels,” said Dr. Ryan Deibert, 2026 WOA President and practicing optometrist in New Berlin. “We may see signs of vascular stress or damage that point to broader health concerns.”

### Often Silent, Sometimes Visible

When High blood pressure and cardiovascular disease can progress without obvious symptoms, but vision changes may occasionally provide clues. These can include brief blurred vision, visual disturbances, or unexplained changes in sight.

If left unmanaged, hypertension can damage retinal blood vessels and nerve tissue and may contribute to vision loss. Stroke can also impair the optic nerve or visual processing centers in the brain.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the state, and many adults with hypertension are unaware they have it.

### When to Schedule an Exam

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the state, claiming more than 5,000 lives each year. An estimated two out of five Wisconsin adults have hypertension and may not know it.

Doctors emphasize that many cardiovascular conditions can be managed more effectively when detected early.

### Symptoms That Should Prompt an Eye Exam

WOA doctors recommend prompt evaluation if patients experience:

- Sudden blurred or double vision
- Difficulty reading or focusing at near
- Eye pain or pressure
- Halos or dark rings around lights
- New dark spots in vision
- Flashes of light

Annual comprehensive eye exams are also recommended for adults with cardiovascular risk factors, even without symptoms.

“An eye exam does more than check vision,” Dr. Deibert said. “It can provide valuable insight into overall vascular health.”

To find a licensed doctor of optometry, visit [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).

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### About the Wisconsin Optometric Association

The Wisconsin Optometric Association (WOA) is a nonprofit affiliation of licensed doctors of optometry and associated businesses dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the vision welfare of the people of Wisconsin. The WOA accomplishes its goals through: education and dissemination of information, organized governmental activity, legislation and regulation, mediation with consumer and public interest groups, and provision of collective benefits to its members. Over 620 doctors of optometry are currently members of the WOA, located in nearly every county in the state. All members must be licensed to practice optometry by the State of Wisconsin. For more information, visit WOA’s website at [www.woa-eyes.org](http://www.woa-eyes.org).