

Access to the Annex Building, 400 S. Fort Harrison Ave. in Clearwater, remains limited. But much of our staff is onsite. Please call Human Resources' main number to ask a question or to make an appointment. (727) 464-3367.

## Senior Vision: Celebrating Healthy Vision Month

By Amy Hertog, BSN, RN

Vision changes occur as you get older, but these changes do not need to impair quality of life. Having routine eye care and exams may help preserve your vision.

In the years after you turn 60, it is possible to develop certain eye diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, and retinal detachment.

In addition, having certain underlying health conditions may affect your vision. People with diabetes, high blood pressure, and those who take medications that have eye-related side effects are at a greater risk for developing vision problems. For example, a person with diabetes is at risk for developing diabetic retinopathy. Uncontrolled hypertension may lead to hypertensive retinopathy.

Many eye diseases have no early symptoms. Because these diseases develop painlessly, some people do not notice changes to their vision until the disease is more advanced. The American Optometric Association recommends **annual eye examinations** for everyone over age 60.

### Driving safely after 60

Age-related vision changes and eye diseases may negatively impact driving abilities, even before you are aware of symptoms. Some common age-related vision changes include:

- Not being able to see road signs as clearly.
- Difficulty seeing objects up close (car instrument panel).
- Difficulty judging distances and speed.
- Changes in color perception.
- Problems seeing in low light/at night.
- Difficulty adapting to bright sunlight or glares.
- Loss of side vision.

### Tips for safer driving

- Use extra caution at intersections.
- Reduce speed.
- Limit to daytime driving if you have trouble seeing at night.
- Avoid wearing eyeglasses and sunglasses with wide frames (so as to not obstruct side vision).
- Consider taking a driving course for seniors (learn how to compensate for physical changes).
- Remember to get an annual eye exam.

[Learn more](#) about aging and your eyes.

## Do You Know What You'll Do In the Event of a Disaster?

If you have functional special needs or issues with access, your need to take the proper steps to prepare for a disaster or other emergency. Building your special needs plan is the first step.

Did you know the Department of Elder Affairs has published a [Disaster Resource Guide for Older Adults](#)? Included in the issue are articles about how to plan ahead if you have special

needs, hurricane readiness, how to protect valuable documents, State and Federal disaster contact information, contact information for all the Florida Area Agency on Aging chapters, planning for your pets, and more helpful information.



## Are you caring for someone with dementia?

The [Savvy Caregiver Virtual Training Program](#) is a free, live online training program designed for caregivers who assist persons with dementia. This is a seven-week training designed to help caregivers lessen their own stress and improve their particular situation.



Improve your caregiving experience. [Register online](#) or call (352) 692-5277. Savvy Caregiver is sponsored by Elder Options and the State of Florida, Department of Elder Affairs.

Also offered are two 4-week **Coping with Caregiving** free, live online training programs for individuals in caregiving situations. The program helps to find ways to both help you with your needs and help with the needs of the person you care for. [Register online](#) or call (352) 692-5277.

## Florida Elder Update Newsletter

[Subscribe](#) to *The Elder Update* from the Florida Department of Elder Affairs. The [February issue](#) includes articles on Medicare, scams, veterans affairs, transportation options, vaccines and even farmers markets!



## Wellness Center Update

The Clearwater Wellness Center in the Old Courthouse has returned to pre-COVID hours and is open 24/7.

If you are new to the Wellness Center and would like access, schedule an orientation by using the [Orientation Sign-up](#).

Before you go, please note the following:

- Showers are open.
- Fitness classes are not being held at this time.
- Orientations are offered by appointment only.

### Questions?

Contact Wellness at [wellness@pinellascounty.org](mailto:wellness@pinellascounty.org) or 464-3367, option 1.



### Pinellas County Benefits

400 S. Fort Harrison Ave.  
Clearwater, FL 33756

(727) 464-4570 | Fax 464-5291

[employee.benefits@pinellascounty.org](mailto:employee.benefits@pinellascounty.org)

## Retiree Resources

### Medicare Health Plan:

- UnitedHealthcare MAPPO  
(800) 457-8506  
(includes Rx and behavioral health)  
[UHCRetiree.com](http://UHCRetiree.com)
- **(NEW in 2021)** EyeMed  
(866) 939-3633  
[www.EyeMed.com/en-us/member](http://www.EyeMed.com/en-us/member)

**Human Resources**  
*Helping U Succeed*

### Non-Medicare and Traditional Medicare Health Plan:

- UnitedHealthcare  
(888) 478-4752 [myuhc.com](http://myuhc.com)
- Express Scripts  
(866) 544-9221  
[Express-Scripts.com](http://Express-Scripts.com)
- **(NEW in 2021)** EyeMed  
(866) 939-3633  
[www.EyeMed.com/en-us/member](http://www.EyeMed.com/en-us/member)

### Dental Plan:

Cigna (800) 244-6224  
[myCigna.com](http://myCigna.com)

**Florida Retirement System (FRS):** (866) 446-9377  
[myfrs.com](http://myfrs.com)

**Pinellas County Retirement Information:**

[www.pinellascounty.org/hr/retiree](http://www.pinellascounty.org/hr/retiree)



## Disaster Volunteers Needed

When disasters threaten or impact Pinellas County, we need YOU to help deliver critical services to our community. Assistance may be needed before, during and after an emergency event.

Whether it's staffing the Emergency Operations Center or supporting a shelter or other disaster operation, there is no shortage of ways you can help our community.



Pinellas County Emergency Management staff will provide training.

### *Which position is best for you?*

**Amateur Radio Operator:** Provide backup communications to the Emergency Operations center when normal communications are interrupted or congested.

**County Information Center Support Staff:** Answer citizen inquiries by phone and email while stationed at the County's Emergency Operations Center in Largo.

**Emergency Operations Center Support Staff:** Support feeding and facility operations at the Emergency Operations Center.

**Field Operations Support Staff:** Assist as needed such as taking inventory in a warehouse, receiving deliveries, and distributing supplies to support feeding operations at County Government locations.

**Shelter Staff:** Assist with shelter operations and coordination of resources.

**Special Needs and Healthcare Staff:** Assist in the Emergency Operations Center with the Special Needs Evacuation Assistance Program and/or Healthcare Facility Welfare Checks.

### **Sign up now!**

To volunteer, visit our website at [www.pinellascounty.org/volserv/disaster](http://www.pinellascounty.org/volserv/disaster) or call Volunteer Services at (727) 464-3367.

## Macular Degeneration:

### *Detecting and Preventing a Leading Cause of Vision Loss*

*An article from EyeMed*

The causes of age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, can be complex, involving heredity, the environment and lifestyle habits. Identifying its effects, however, can be relatively straightforward.



### **Detecting AMD and Its Effects**

Those who have macular degeneration generally have blurred central vision. The eye condition is often called age-related macular degeneration because it tends to occur as we age.

The effects of AMD include:

- A waviness of lines or doorways appearing crooked
- Objects appear smaller or farther away
- More light needed to see up close
- Decreased color brightness
- Difficulty recognizing faces
- Vision haziness
- Blurry or blind spots in central vision

Undiagnosed, the long-term effects of AMD include continued vision loss or low vision that could make everyday tasks such as writing, reading or shopping difficult, even with prescription lenses.

### **Reducing the Risks of AMD**

While age-related macular degeneration is hard to avoid, several conditions contribute to the risk of it occurring. By understanding these characteristics, you can reduce your risk of developing AMD or slow its progression:

- Too much sun
- Inactivity
- Smoking
- Antacids
- Poor diet

Also, women, Caucasians and people with light-colored eyes are more likely to develop AMD, as are those with a family history of it.

If you notice any changes in your central vision or in your ability to see colors, make an immediate appointment for an eye exam. Because AMD exhibits few symptoms in its early stages, annual eye exams are the best way to improve the chances of getting an early diagnosis, and keeping your world in focus.