Visual Field Test

What is a visual field test?

Your **visual field** is how much you see around you. It includes your central (front) vision and your peripheral (side) vision. A **visual field test** creates a map of your visual field. This map shows where you can see, as well as where you may have trouble seeing things. Ophthalmologists use a visual field test to find and monitor certain eye problems, such as glaucoma.

What happens in a visual field test?

Your eye doctor or a technician will test one of your eyes at a time. He or she will put a patch over the eye not being tested. You will sit at the edge of a large, bowl-shaped device called a "perimeter." Your chin will be in a chin rest to keep you from looking around or moving your head.

Visual field testing is used to monitor peripheral, or side, vision.

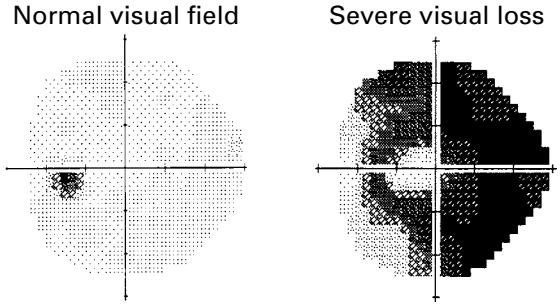
You will be asked to look at a spot straight ahead. A computer will make sounds, sometimes followed by a flash of light. Any time you see a light, you simply press a button.

In one test, lights move from outside your visual field towards the center of your vision. As soon as you can see the light, you press the button.

In the other type of test, lights suddenly appear in different areas on the screen. They do not move from one area to another. When you see them, you press the button.

It is important to keep looking straight ahead. Do not move your eyes to look for a light. Also, do not worry if you have trouble seeing some of the lights. This is normal and expected. The test is designed to use very dim lights so your doctor can determine your full range of vision.

Speak up if you get tired during this test. The technician can stop the test until you are ready to start again. After you finish the visual field test, your ophthalmologist will talk with you about the results.



These grids show results from visual field tests. The dark shaded areas show where there is vision loss. The grid on the left shows a normal visual field. The grid on the right shows severe vision loss.

A normal visual field is represented in the top image on the top. The bottom image is an example of early to moderate visual field damage.

Visual field tests may be a regular part of your treatment.

Depending on your eye problem, your ophthalmologist may want you to have a visual field test 1–2 times each year. This helps them monitor changes in your vision and make any needed treatment changes.

Summary

A visual field test measures how much you can see around you. Ophthalmologists often use this test to diagnose and monitor eye problems.

To take the test, you sit at a device called a perimeter with one eye covered. When you see a light appear on a screen, you simply press a button. The test is repeated using the other eye.

Your ophthalmologist will tell you how often you should have a visual field test.

If you have any questions about your eyes or your vision, speak with your ophthalmologist. He or she is committed to protecting your sight.

Get more information about eye health from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at **aao.org/eyesmart**.

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