

Visual Field Testing

Your visual field is everything you see, straight on and on both sides.

Because you use both your eyes at the same time, you might not notice changes in only one eye's visual field. Because diseases such as glaucoma can affect only one eye, it's important that any inconsistency or change in the vision in one eye be diagnosed and treated.

A visual field test measures how much side, or peripheral, vision you have. This is important to detect many diseases that affect the eye, the optic nerve and the brain. Visual field tests can help diagnose brain tumors, strokes and other conditions. Since glaucoma can produce a defect in the visual field, visual field testing is used to monitor glaucoma. It may also be used as a screening test before eye surgery.

To take a visual field test, you simply have to stare straight ahead at a fixed spot and each time you see a flash of light or a specified target at the side of your vision, you click a button or respond verbally. Each eye is tested separately, and there are two kinds of tests...moving and fixed.

With a moving target test, the target is moved from where you can't see it towards the center of your vision, where you respond once you are able to see it. The moving target test may be manual (performed by a technician using a wall) or with a large bowl shaped instrument.

The fixed target test utilizes targets that do not move, but shift from dim to bright. The fixed target test is computerized.

The visual field test is painless and easy, although some patients complain of getting bored or feeling that they aren't doing the test correctly. This may be because the targets get dimmer and dimmer as the test goes along. Just remember that the visual field test provides information about your eye health that no other test can.

Your visual field results show us the limits of your peripheral (side) vision and gives us important information about the neurological function of your visual system. Since a test like this is administered each time you have an eye check-up, we can monitor your vision and note any changes that might signal a disorder.