

Eye Exam: New Lease on Life

A stress-free appointment with a trusted doctor showed the way to a longer, healthier life.

It's true. Meet 60-something Linda Butcher-Cline. Like a lot of us, the almost-retiree put off some routine tasks, including a yearly eye exam.

Linda actually waited three years between exams. When she made it in to see Thomas Littler, O.D., the timing was nothing short of life changing.

“Her eyes say ‘healthy’ again.”

Our eyes provide a clear and unequalled view into our bodies and overall health. And Dr. Littler, who practices in Athens, Ohio, saw some troubling things in Linda's eyes. He noticed the telltale signs of high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

A yellowish tint in her blood vessels, typical of high cholesterol, wasn't the only problem. The good doctor was shocked to see a blocked blood vessel in Linda's eyes too.

“Linda thought she was very healthy, and she had no obvious symptoms of these problems,” says Dr. Littler. “I'm so glad she came in when she did. I told her to get to her primary care doctor ASAP to confirm my suspicions and get treatment.”

Hurry she did, and good thing too. Linda's medical doctor found cholesterol levels above 260 and high blood pressure on top of that, an unfortunate recipe for heart disease and stroke. A good treatment plan in place, and Linda's future looks bright – and long.

Later, Linda also was treated for other problems – a blocked carotid artery and a blocked blood vessel in her heart.

It's hard to believe Linda once waited three years between eye exams. “I keep track of my calendar by Linda now,” jokes Dr. Littler. “She's in here every year, and her eyes say ‘healthy’ again.”

Just Facts

- Cholesterol is a waxy substance that flows through your blood stream. Eye doctors can often be the first ones to see signs of high cholesterol, because the yellowish stuff builds up in blood vessels, easily visible only through the eyes.
- Cholesterol: There's good and bad, but healthy levels are below 200, total.
- Healthy blood pressure: under 120/80.
- The CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention) report stroke as the third leading cause of death and disability in the U.S.