

VISUAL FIELD TESTING

Your visual field refers to the total area in which objects can be seen in the side (peripheral) vision while you focus your eyes on a central point.

Visual field testing produces a map of your complete field of vision. It helps to monitor any loss of vision and to diagnose eye disorders.

HOW IS A VISUAL FIELD TEST PERFORMED?

The test is performed with a large, bowl-shaped instrument called a perimeter. In order to test one eye at a time, one of your eyes is temporarily patched during the test. You will be seated and positioned comfortably in front of the perimeter and asked to look straight ahead at a fixed spot. The computer randomly flashes points of light around the bowl-shaped perimeter. When you see a light, press the indicator button. It is very important to always keep looking straight ahead. Do not move your eyes to look for the target; wait until it appears in your side vision. A delay in seeing a light does not necessarily mean your field of vision is damaged. If you need to rest during the test, tell the technician, and she will stop the test until you are ready to continue. Your ophthalmologist will interpret the results of your test.

TYPES OF VISUAL FIELD TESTS

There are two main testing methods:

Moving Targets: Targets are moved from where you can't see them (beyond your side vision) in towards the center of your vision until you do see them. As soon as the target appears in your field of vision, you press the indicator button.

Fixed Targets: Instead of targets moving into your field of vision, fixed targets suddenly appear in different areas on the screen. When the targets appear, you press the indicator button.

WHY ARE VISUAL FIELD TESTS IMPORTANT?

Visual field testing helps your ophthalmologist diagnose problems with your eyes, optic nerve, or brain, including:

- loss of vision;
- glaucoma;
- disorders of your retina (layer of cells that line the back of your eye);
- other neurologic conditions including brain tumors, multiple sclerosis, and increased intracranial pressure.

Visual field testing is used to measure peripheral vision loss. The test is repeated at appropriate time intervals to determine if vision loss is progressing or remaining stable. If you are diagnosed with a particular disorder or disease, such as glaucoma, visual field testing become a routine part of your treatment.