These days, 60 is the new 40. A few worry lines and gray hairs aren't stopping baby boomers from staying active and redefining retirement.

One body part significantly affected as we age is the eye. For some, this means holding the newspaper at arm's length, or giving up night driving. Yet, many overlook eye health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only half the estimated 61 million adults at high risk for serious vision loss visited an eye-care professional in the last year. Fortunately, you can protect your eyes, and even reverse signs of eye aging with a few simple steps.

• Everyone 50 or older should get yearly comprehensive eye exams. Doing so allows for detection of eye diseases in early stages, before you experience vision problems — some of which may be permanent.

• Adults over 50 should be mindful of symptoms of common age-related eye diseases, such as cataracts, the leading cause of reversible blindness in the U.S. Blurry vision and needing more light to read even while wearing glasses can be early signs.

With a cataract, the eye's lens becomes cloudy, allowing less light to pass through, making vision blurry.

In early stages, symptoms may not hold you back, but vision may worsen as the cataract grows. It's important to get examined as soon as you notice changes in vision, even if they seem minor. In later stages, you may experience poor night vision, colors looking dull, difficulty with glares or halos, and double vision.

Cataracts are more treatable than ever. That's good news, considering half of all Americans will be diagnosed with cataracts by age 80.

“In the U.S. alone, cataracts affect over 24 million Americans 40 and older,” says Richard J. Mackool, M.D., senior attending surgeon, New York Eye and Ear Institute.

About 3 million people have cataracts removed in the U.S. each year, making it one of the most common procedures.

The eye’s cloudy lens is removed and replaced with an artificial intraocular lens (IOL). Traditional IOLs can correct distance vision, but new advanced-technology IOLs can also help correct pre-existing eye conditions like astigmatism and age-related presbyopia. These new IOLs can potentially eliminate the need for glasses.

Baby boomers don’t have to accept deteriorating vision as a natural part of aging and give up their favorite hobbies.

“Cataract removal has a very high success rate. Most people can return to normal routines within 24 hours,” notes Dr. Mackool.

Seniors should talk to their doctors and visit the National Institutes of Health National Eye Institute website, www.nei.nih.gov, to learn about cataracts and treatment options.

—Statepoint