Why eye check-ups are critical for motorists

By Ahmad Muto

Hello motorist, when did you last have an eye check-up? Remember the eye needs to have proper vision to enable you to make good judgement behind the steering wheel.

It should be recalled that last year, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Health, Dr Diana Atwine, proposed mandatory regular eye check-ups for motorists, saying it will reduce road carnage.

She said she has seen cases of drivers with cataracts that are active on the road and in one particular case, it was a driver of a government vehicle whose boss had not noticed until she wrote to him explaining the risk. Atwiine added that road crash injuries place a heavy burden on the health care system.

She made the remarks during the second East African Symposium and Expo on trauma, injuries and emergency care at Makerere University.

Emmanuel Aleti, the inspector of vehicles, said eye check-up is an important test because it helps the driver see properly and therefore make good judgement. He says drivers should do check-ups regularly, at least once a year to ensure safety because many people have sight challenges that differ from person to person.

"There are those with night vision challenges, colour vision challenges, short sightedness and long sightedness, so there are a lot of issues to do with eyesight. Testing someone before taking on a driving test or acquiring a licence is very important. Because without proper vision, one cannot see what is ahead and you can definitely get involved in an accident," Aleti said.

Dr Gladys Atto, an ophthalmologist, said eye check-up is critical, and not just for motorists but everyone else using the road, even as a pedestrian.

She said because motorists are not mandated to conduct eye check-ups, they do not find a reason to do it, owing to the fact that what they are looking for is survival.

"When they are mandated to do the check-up, they will come to us. If anyone wants to ride a boda, I don't think they want to do a check-up, even if they know they have a problem. Why go to someone who wouldn't recommend them? They'll go somewhere where they will easily be recommended."

Atto suggests eye check-ups every time a driving licence is being issued and renewed because sight can change.

"Eye check-ups should ideally be every time a driver wants to renew their licence because they should know if your eyesight is still in good state. Anything can happen to anyone at any time. Anyone who cares about life should do it. I wouldn't be doing surgeries with bad eyesight because I will be putting someone's eye at risk. It goes back to integrity. If you are going to drive with bad eyesight, you might injure your own people," she said.

Aleti added that humans tend to have one eye with better sight than the other, like for him, his left eye has clearer vision than the right.

"I have tested it. So, my corrective lens has different focal points. And that is what I realised."

Atto explains that it happens to every body part. One can be better than the other.

"Yes, that happens to different body parts. You can have a better leg than the other. You can have one ear blocked and the other not. The only thing with eyesight is when we are assessing, we assess vision in the better eye. Yes, you can have poor vision in one eye but we assess the better eye. You can have one eye totally not seeing anything while the other eye is seeing, we consider you to have good vision," she explains.



Dr Atto conducting an eye check-up. She says it's necessary for both motorists and pedestrians

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