Educating Older Americans About Their Aging Eyes
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Educating Older Americans About Their Aging Eyes

• Learn about vision loss.
• Educate older adults.
• Help spread the word.
LEARNING ABOUT VISION LOSS

Aging in the United States

Population age 65 and over and age 85 and over, selected years 1900–2008 and projected 2010–2050

NOTE: Data for 2010–2050 are projections of the population. Reference population: These data refer to the resident population. SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, Population Estimates and Projections.
## Eye Diseases and Conditions Prevalence and Projections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>2010 Estimates</th>
<th>2030 Projections</th>
<th>2050 Projections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age-Related Macular Degeneration</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
<td>3,700,000</td>
<td>5,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataract</td>
<td>24,400,000</td>
<td>38,700,000</td>
<td>50,200,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetic Retinopathy</td>
<td>7,700,000</td>
<td>11,300,000</td>
<td>14,600,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glaucoma</td>
<td>2,700,000</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
<td>6,300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Vision</td>
<td>2,900,000</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>8,900,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common Vision Problems With Age

- Vision loss and blindness are not a normal part of aging.
- Some vision changes are common:
  - Losing focus
  - Noticing declining sensitivity
  - Needing more light
Many Vision Changes Can Be Corrected

- Vision changes can often be corrected with:
  - Contact lenses
  - Glasses
  - Improved lighting

- People can age without experiencing changes in their vision.
Age-Related Eye Diseases and Conditions

- As people get older, these are the common eye diseases and conditions they could face:
  - Age-related macular degeneration
  - Cataract
  - Diabetic retinopathy
  - Glaucoma
  - Dry eye
  - Low vision
Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Damages the macula, which is needed for sharp, detailed central vision
Age-Related Macular Degeneration

Normal vision

Same scene viewed by a person with advanced age-related macular degeneration
Age-Related Macular Degeneration

- **Risk factors:**
  - Age, smoking, family history, obesity, race

- **Symptoms:**
  - No pain
  - Blurred vision
  - Drusen (only visible to an eye care professional)
Age-Related Macular Degeneration

• **Treatment options:**
  - Age-Related Eye Disease Study (AREDS) special vitamins/minerals supplement formulation
  - Eye injections
  - Laser surgery
Cataract

Clouding of the eye’s lens that causes loss of vision
Cataract

Normal vision

Same scene viewed by a person with a cataract
Cataract

- **Risk factors:**
  - Age
  - Diabetes, smoking, and exposure to sunlight

- **Symptoms:**
  - Cloudy or blurred vision
  - Colors that appear less vivid as they once did
  - Glare
  - Poor night vision
Cataract

- **Treatment options:**
  - Glasses
  - Better lighting
  - Surgery
Diabetic Eye Disease

Group of eye problems associated with diabetes, including diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataract
Diabetic Eye Disease

Normal vision

Same scene viewed by a person with advanced diabetic retinopathy
Diabetic Eye Disease

- **Symptoms:**
  - No early warning signs or symptoms

- **Treatment options:**
  - Laser treatment
  - Injections
  - Early detection and timely treatment can reduce the risk of severe vision loss by 95 percent.
Glaucoma

Group of eye diseases that damages the optic nerve of the eye
Glaucoma

Normal vision

Same scene viewed by a person with advanced glaucoma
Glaucoma

- **Risk factors:**
  - Age, race, and family history
    - African Americans over age 40
    - Everyone over age 60, especially Hispanics/Latinos
    - People with a family history of glaucoma
  - People with diabetes
Glaucoma

- **Symptoms:**
  - No early warning signs or symptoms
  - No pain
  - Loss of side vision

- **Treatment options:**
  - Medications, usually eye drops
  - Laser or conventional surgery
Dry Eye

Occurs when the eye does not produce tears properly or when tears evaporate too quickly

Common symptoms:
• Episodes of excess tears following dry periods
• Feeling of sand or grit
• Blurred vision
• Pain and redness
• Stringy discharge from the eye
• Stinging or burning of the eye
• Sensitivity to light
Dry Eye

- People at higher risk:
  - Dry eye can occur at any age.
  - Women experience dry eye more often than men.
  - Dry eye can occur as a side effect of certain medications.
  - Can also result from focusing on a computer screen for long periods of time.
Dry Eye

• Treatment options:
  ▪ Using artificial tears, prescription eye drops, gels, gel inserts, and ointments
  ▪ Wearing glasses or sunglasses
  ▪ Getting punctal or tear duct plugs
Low Vision

A visual impairment that cannot be corrected by regular glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery that interferes with the ability to perform everyday activities.
Low Vision

- **People at higher risk:**
  - People with eye disease
  - People who develop vision loss after eye injuries or from birth defects

- **Treatment options:**
  - Vision rehabilitation
Educating Older Adults About Vision Loss

• Existing knowledge about eye health and disease
• Key eye health messages to communicate to older adults
• Ways to prevent vision loss
Survey Question

- What percentage of older adults are aware that glaucoma has no early symptoms?
  - 90 percent
  - 65 percent
  - 35 percent
  - 10 percent
Survey Question

- What percentage of older adults are aware that age-related macular degeneration runs in families?
  - 90 percent
  - 65 percent
  - 35 percent
  - 10 percent
What Do Older Adults Know About Vision Loss?

Most older Americans (65+) have heard of different eye diseases but don’t know a lot about how they affect the eyes.

- 96% heard of glaucoma; only 10% knew it has no early symptoms
- 70% heard of AMD; 57% knew you can have it and not know it; 35% knew it runs in families
- 65% heard of diabetic eye disease; 58% knew vision loss can be prevented; only 8% knew it had no early symptoms
- 16% had heard of low vision
- 71% said loss of eyesight would have the greatest impact on their daily life compared to loss of memory, hearing, speech, or a limb
What Do Older Adults Know About Vision Loss?

• Most older adults have limited knowledge of age-related eye disease, and think it is a natural part of aging.

• They fear the loss of vision will mean loss of independence.

• The barriers they face include:
  - Not wanting their pupils dilated
  - Absence of health insurance
  - Lack of awareness
Ways to Prevent Vision Loss

Step #1

- Visit an eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam.
Comprehensive Dilated Eye Exam

An eye care professional puts dilating drops in a patient's eye.

The eyes are examined for any signs of damage or disease.
The Dilated Eye

UNDILATED PUPIL

- RETINA
- RAY OF LIGHT
- PORTION OF RETINA THAT CAN BE SEEN THROUGH UNDILATED PUPIL
- OPTIC NERVE
- PUPIL

DILATED PUPIL

- RETINA
- RAY OF LIGHT
- PORTION OF RETINA THAT CAN BE SEEN THROUGH DILATED PUPIL
- OPTIC NERVE
- PUPIL
Ways to Prevent Vision Loss

Step #2

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
Step #3

- Maintain a healthy weight.
Ways to Prevent Vision Loss

Step #4

- Don’t smoke.
Step #5

- Keep diabetes under control.
Ways to Prevent Vision Loss

Step #6

- Wear sunglasses and a brimmed hat outdoors.
Step #7

- Wear protective eyewear.
Ways to Prevent Vision Loss

Step #8

- Know your family’s eye health history.
Helping Spread the Word About Vision Loss

- NEHEP is dedicated to preventing vision loss and promoting vision rehabilitation through public and professional education programs.
- Health and community professionals play a vital role in raising awareness.
- The NEHEP Vision and Aging Program has a variety of resources.
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- NEH EP Vision and Aging Program website
- See Well for a Lifetime Toolkit
- Infographics
- Drop-in article
- Social media resources
- Medicare benefit card
- Age-related Eye Diseases Web page
- Living With Low Vision booklet and DVD
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- NEHSEP Vision and Aging Program website
  - Designed for professionals who work with older adults
  - www.nei.nih.gov/nehsep/programs/visionandaging
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

• **See Well for a Lifetime Toolkit**
  - For health and community professionals who work with older adults
Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- Infographics
  - Use in newsletter articles or on websites and social media pages
  - www.nei.nih.gov/nehep
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- **Drop-in article**
  - Use on websites, blogs, newsletters, or other.
  - [www.nei.nih.gov/ham](http://www.nei.nih.gov/ham)

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**Take care of your eyes as you age**

Aging is a process that provides us with many opportunities to reinvent ourselves, from major transformations such as becoming a grandparent or going back to school to simple lifestyle changes like starting a new exercise program. Don’t miss out on any of these opportunities; take stock of your eye health to make sure you are seeing your best and that your eyes are healthy.

Many eye diseases have no early warning signs or symptoms, but they can be detected early with regular comprehensive dilated eye exams.

A comprehensive dilated eye exam is different from the basic eye exam or screening you have to get new glasses or contacts. Your eye care professional will place drops in your eyes to dilate, or widen, the pupil. Then, he or she will use a special magnifying glass to examine the inside of your eye for early signs of—

- Age-related macular degeneration, which gradually destroys the macula (the part of the eye that provides sharp, central vision)
- Cataract, a clouding of the lens in the eye
- Diabetic retinopathy, a complication of diabetes that damages blood vessels in the retina (the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye)
- Glaucoma, a group of diseases that can cause fluid and pressure to build up in the eye and damage the optic nerve

Don’t wait until you notice problems with your vision. Call your eye care professional today to make an appointment for a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Early diagnosis and treatment are the best ways to prevent vision loss. And if you have been diagnosed with an eye disease or condition, work with your eye care professional to learn about your treatment or rehabilitation options. Improve your knowledge of eye health to ensure a healthy foundation for change.

Visit [www.nei.nih.gov/agingeye](http://www.nei.nih.gov/agingeye) for more information.
Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- Social Media Resources
  - Ready-to-post Facebook and Twitter messages
  - Vision and Aging board on Pinterest
  - Eye disease videos on YouTube

- [www.nei.nih.gov/nehep](http://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep)
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

• Medicare Benefit Card

• Promotes the glaucoma and diabetic eye disease benefit under Medicare

• Will help pay for comprehensive dilated eye exams for:
  - African Americans age 50 or older
  - Hispanics/Latinos age 65 or older
  - People with a family history of glaucoma
  - People with diabetes

https://www.nei.nih.gov/nehep/programs/visionandaging/medicare

Financial Assistance:
www.nei.nih.gov/healthyeyes/financialaid.asp
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- **Age-Related Eye Diseases Web page**
  - Designed to educate older adults about eye health
  - [www.nei.nih.gov/agingeye](http://www.nei.nih.gov/agingeye)

**Information for Healthy Vision**

**Age-Related Eye Diseases**

Age-related eye diseases and conditions

Since you are older, you probably noticed that your vision is changing. Perhaps you need glasses to see up close or you have more trouble adjusting to glare or distinguishing some colors. These changes are a normal part of aging. These changes alone cannot stop you from enjoying an active lifestyle or stop you from maintaining your independence. In fact, you can live an active life well into your golden years without ever experiencing severe vision loss. But as you age, you are at higher risk of developing age-related eye diseases and conditions. These include: age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic eye diseases, glaucoma, low vision, and dry eye.

Get a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

Everyone age 40 or older should visit an eye care professional for a comprehensive dilated eye exam. Many eye diseases have no early warning signs or symptoms, but a dilated exam can detect eye diseases in their early stages before vision loss occurs. Early detection and intervention can help you save your sight. Even if you aren't experiencing any vision problems, visit your eye care professional for a dilated eye exam. He or she will tell you how often you need to have one depending on your specific risk factors.

**Common Age-related Eye Diseases and Conditions:**

- **Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)**: AMD is a disease associated with aging that gradually distorts the central vision. Central vision is needed for seeing objects clearly and for many daily tasks such as reading and driving. Learn more about AMD.

- **Cataracts**: A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye. Vision with cataracts can appear cloudy or blurry, colors may seem faded and you may notice a lot of glare. Learn more about Cataracts.
Resources That Help You Spread The Word

- **Living With Low Vision** booklet and DVD
  - Designed for people with vision loss and their friend, family, and caregivers
  - [www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision](http://www.nei.nih.gov/lowvision)
HELPING SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT VISION LOSS

Resources That Help You Spread The Word

• **Outlook**
  - Provides updates on NEHEP eye health education research, activities, and resources

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**Outlook**

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- Letter From the Chair of the NEHEP Planning Committee
- Raise Awareness of Low Vision with NEHEP Resources
- Low Vision: What to Do When "There's Nothing More That Can be Done."
- NEI and NEHEP Have Gone Social
- Use the National Eye Institute Website to Serve Yourself!
- Free Learning Module and Tip Sheet Available from ASORN
- Prevent Blindness Provides New Online Resource for Information on Vision Insurance
- Falls Prevention Awareness Day a Huge Success
- Featured Organization: VisionServe Alliance
- On the Road With NEHEP
- Let Us Know What You Think About Outlook

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Educational Resource Spotlight: Low Vision Infographic

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Additional Resources

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- NEHEP Twitter: @NEHEP
- NEI Twitter: @NatEyeInstitute
- Pinterest: /neinih
- NEHEP website: www.nei.nih.gov/nehep
Questions
Please Share Your Activities

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thank you!