

# Eye Care America

## Eye Disease Can Affect More Than Your Sight

(NAPS)—Eye disease affects more than your ability to see the world clearly. People with impaired vision face an increased risk of falls, fractures, injuries, depression, anxiety, cognitive deficits and social isolation. One of the best ways to protect yourself against vision loss from eye disease is to get regular eye exams.

Ophthalmologists—physicians who specialize in medical and surgical eye care—have more tools than ever before to diagnose eye diseases earlier, and to treat them better. But these advances cannot help people whose disease is undiagnosed, or who are unaware of the seriousness of their disease.

That's why the American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends all adults receive a comprehensive eye exam by age 40, and every year or two after age 65.

Here's how low vision can affect nearly every aspect of your life:

### 1. Depression and social isolation.

Being unable to drive, read, enjoy hobbies or see loved ones' faces is frightening and can lead some people to withdraw from life, leaving them feeling helpless or lonely. One study found that after being diagnosed with a vision-threatening eye disease, a person's chance of experiencing depression triples.

**2. Dementia.** Several studies suggest a connection between eye disease and dementia. While the cause is unclear, it's possible some eye diseases interfere with the brain's sensory pathways. Early diagnosis and treatment are the best way to prevent vision loss.

**3. Injuries from falls.** People with decreased vision are more likely to misstep and fall. Every year, about 3 million



**Regular vision checks can help you see your way clear to a better social life and healthier living.**

older Americans are treated for injuries from falls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Many of these falls are caused by low vision. Luckily there are some changes around the house people can make, such as grouping furniture together and increasing lighting. Seeing an ophthalmologist regularly and making sure your glasses are updated with your latest prescription are important safety precautions as well.

### Can't Afford an Eye Exam?

#### EyeCare America® Can Help.

For individuals age 65 or older who are concerned about their risk of eye disease and/or the cost of an eye exam, you may be eligible for a medical eye exam, often at no out-of-pocket cost, through the American Academy of Ophthalmology's EyeCare America® program. This public service program matches volunteer ophthalmologists with eligible patients in need of eye care across the United States. To see if you or a loved one qualifies, visit [www.aao.org/eyecare-america](http://www.aao.org/eyecare-america) to determine your eligibility.