



Eye on Health

Think You Need New Glasses? You Might Have Cataracts

(NAPSA)—Many seniors think that new glasses and a stronger prescription are all they need to regain the vision of their youth. In fact, cataracts may be the cause for the decline in vision. The condition is the leading cause of vision loss among adults 55 and older. More than half the people over age 65 have some degree of cataract development.

If you think you might have cataracts, call EyeCare America's Seniors EyeCare Program. This program offers eye exams and care to seniors who are without an ophthalmologist. To see if you, a loved one or a friend, 65 and older, is eligible to receive a referral for an eye exam and care, call 1-800-222-EYES (3937). The EyeCare America help line operates 24 hours a day, year-round.

"I was more than pleased with the care I received through EyeCare America. The first visit, the doctor found I had cataracts in both eyes and one would need immediate attention. Within a month, I was doing fine after surgery. Thank you, EyeCare America!" said EyeCare America patient, Hazel Dalton.

What is a cataract?

A cataract is a clouding of the lens in the eye, the part of the eye that focuses light and produces clear images. Inside of the eye, the lens is contained in a sealed bag or capsule. As old cells die they become trapped within the capsule. Over time, more cells die and accumulate, causing the lens to cloud, making images look blurred or fuzzy.

In the early stages, stronger lighting and eyeglasses may lessen vision problems caused by cataracts. At a certain point, however, surgery may be needed to improve vision. Cataract surgery is the most frequently



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performed surgery in the U.S. More than 90 percent of the people who have cataract surgery regain useful vision.

Those who are eligible for the EyeCare America program receive a dilated medical exam and up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost. EyeCare America is able to provide this no-cost care through its network of 7,500 volunteer ophthalmologists who waive patient co-payments and accept Medicare as payment in full for their services. Patients without insurance are not charged.

The Seniors EyeCare Program is for people who:

- Are U.S. citizens or legal residents
- Are age 65 and older
- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Do not belong to an HMO or the VA.

The Seniors EyeCare Program is co-sponsored by the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc. and Alcon.